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The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodhana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

MAKERS OF INDIAN LITERATURE

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Life

As is the case with the majority of poets and authors in Sanskrit, of Bharavi's life and history we know very little. There is little dependable external evidence that can yield anything of value in this regard. Nor does Bharavi himself oblige us. A gifted poet, earning a permanent place of honour in the heart of the discernible reader through a solitary piece of literary creation, he has left behind only a name and the *Kiratarjuniya,* a *mahakavya* in eighteen cantos, but nothing in the nature of personal information is to be found anywhere. Thus, for any personal account of Bharavi we are left at the mercy of legends and stories, obviously of a doubtful value.

We have, for instance, in his case also, the not very uncommon story of a genius' initial poverty and subsequent affluence, of early days of misery and degradation and ultimate days of honour and glory. Thus, according to one version, Bharavi, though very much ground down by poverty, paid no heed, but continued to remain absorbed in poetic activity. His wife could hardly bear with this apathy to the ordinary affairs of daily life and spent much of her time in scolding the poet with a scathing tongue. At last, the poet's patience was exhausted and he stirred into action. He set out, at least for once, to try his luck at the royal court so that the goddess of fortune may smile upon this unfortunate favourite of the goddess of learning. After travelling some distance he felt exhausted and arriving at the bank of a lake stopped for rest. As he passed the time, he composed a verse and wrote it down on a lotus-leaf :

> Do not perform any act rashly. One who acts without circumspection becomes the supreme abode of all calamities. Wealth which is allured only by qualities offers welcome, out of its own accord, to one who acts after due deliberation.

It so happened that at that time the king of the country, on his way to a hunting excursion, was present on the very spot. The king read the verse, became highly pleased and asked the poet to meet him afterwards on his return to the capital and rode away. The poet was very happy and in high spirits, and in due course, presented himself at the gate of the royal palace and sought an interview with the king. But the poet, dressed in rags and mean-looking, carried little conviction and the royal porter, turning a deaf ear to his entreaties for admittance to the royal presence, turned him away rudely. The poet went away in disgrace and despair.

In the meantime, the king had returned to the capital and like a true judge and admirer of qualities had accorded honour to the poet's verse, inscribing it in letters of gold in his private bedroom. Time passed and once again the king set out to hunt with a view to spending some time away from the capital. But, by chance, on the second night, he rode back alone and went into the bedroom. What he saw there shocked and enraged him beyond all imagination. On his own bed, by the side of the queen, lay a youth. At once he decided to put an end to the lives of the unfaithful wife and the illicit lover, and drew out the sword. But directly his eyes fell on the writing on the wall, the golden verse, and he calmed himself down. He decided to wake them up, to tell them of their grave offence and then, to punish them as they deserved. But as soon as she was roused from sleep the queen reported to the king with great joy that the youth was none other than their long lost son, stolen on birth by a nurse, who had been found on that very day. The king, overwhelmed with joy, was in tears at this almost miraculous saving of his queen and son, the sole heir to the throne. Filled with gratitude for the poet, he sought him out and rewarded him lavishly. The poet's days of misery came to an end for good.

There is another story, equally absurd and useless, which makes the three great poets, Kalidasa, Bharavi and Dandin contemporaneous, all of them living under the patronage of King Vikrama in the city of Kanci. One day the poets accompanied the king in a walk through the city and finding a charming youthful girl playing with a ball, each described her composing a verse of his own.

Kalidasa said : "The ball having the shape of the breast is being struck by the hand again and again, as if in anger. So as if to appease the lady the lotus adorning the ear, similar in shape to the eye, fell down on her feet."

Bharavi said : "This ball, though one, appears to be three. The first is the one reddened and reddened by the redness of the beloved lady's palm. The second is the one on the ground whitened and whitened by the rays emitted by her toe-nails. And the third is the one lying still turned blue and blue by the rays coming out of her eyes."

Dandin said : "O ball ! I am aware that your heart has become greedy to touch the blossom-like lips of the young lady and that is why though sent down and down by the stroke of the lotus-like hand of the dear one you are leaping up again and again."

Beside this purely popularly circulated story we have another account which, being based on at least some documentary evidence and historically acceptable data, may merit some more serious attention. It is the account found in the *Avantisundarikatha*, and its metrical summary, the *Avantisundarikathasara*, both attributed to Dandin, the celebrated author of the *Kavyadarsa* and the *Dasakumaracarita*.

According to these, there was, in the north-west part of the country, a place of noble people known as Anandapura. It was inhabited by a large number of Brahmins belonging to the *kausika-gotra*. From that place they migrated to a place called Acalapura, situated in the Nasikya country. One of the Brahmins, Narayanasvamin by name, had a son named Bharavi, who was also known as Damodara; he was meritorious, learned and of great poetical ability. He grew a friendship with Visnuvardhana, the prince of the place, and accompanied him in a hunting excursion during which, in order to save himself from starvation, he was compelled to eat some prohibited food going against the rule of conduct followed by his family. To expiate the sin he set out on a pilgrimage and accidentally met a Brahmin prince named Durvinita and began to live with him. Then, once, having heard his glory sung by a Gandharva in a couplet, King Simhavishnu (of Kanci) invited and rewarded its author, who was none other than the poet Bharavi, about twenty years of

age at that time. The king treated him like his son and he spent the rest of his life at his court and became friendly with the royal prince Mahendravikrama. He was the father of three sons of which the second was Manoratha. Manoratha, again, had four sons of which Viradatta was the youngest. Viradatta's wife Gauri gave birth to a son named Dandin. There is no doubt that the identity of most of the personages mentioned in the account can be historically established.

Simhavisnu was a Pallava king who ruled at Kanci during the latter part of the 6th century A.D., and was the father of Mahendravarman or Mahendravikramavarman I (600-625 A.D.). The latter's attachment to literature is attested to by the fact that he was the author of a farcical play in one act (*prahasana*), the *Mattavilasa*, known after one of his four titles found in the play itself.

Visnuvardhana was most probably the younger brother of Pulakesin II, who after declaring independence from his brother founded the dynasty of Eastern Chalukyas. He also might have reigned about the same time.

Durvinita was a Ganga prince who probably ruled in the beginning of the 7th century A.D. He was the son of King Avinita of Konkana. He was disinherited by his father and in his banishment wandered over distant lands. (Thus the story of his accidental meeting with Damodara or Bharavi who had set out on a pilgrimage acquires plausibility). Reputed to be a great scholar, he is credited with the authorship of a commentary on the fifteenth canto of Bharavi's work, a Sanskrit version of the *Brhatkatha* and an independent work called *Sabdavatara*.

Thus it appears that the dates of the kings mentioned fairly agree and the kings would not be too far removed from one another. Considering also the facts that poets generally flourished under royal patronage and that the kings concerned were also admirers of literature one may be inclined to consider the above account as of some importance.

However, there are serious difficulties too. The most important point for our purpose is the identity of Damodara and Bharavi. But the fact is that the texts do not provide any conclusive evidence in this regard and there remains scope for doubt. Of the texts, the original one, *Avantisundarikatha*,

is in prose, and the *Avantisundarikathasara* is a reproduction of the same in verse. The former is too fragmentary and hardly serves any useful purpose unless the many lacunas are filled in with judgement and care. Thus, for example, Harihara Sastri, after some careful consideration, remarks: "What we learn from the prose and metrical versions is that Bharavi was a Saivaite (*mahasaiva*) and great poet (*giram prabhavah*) attached to the Prince Visnuvardhana and that Damodara, who was also endowed with poetical gifts of a high order, secured the friendship of the Prince through the medium of Bharavi."

Perhaps no less crucial is the problem of identification of the authors of *Dasakumaracarita* and *Avantisundarikatha*. It has thus been argued that 'internal evidence' goes against the identification of the two or that the two works differ qualitatively, for the former is 'mainly realistic' whereas the latter 'fully represents idealism'.

There is again evidence in the *Avantisundarikatha* itself which seems to go against the identity of Damodara and Bharavi. About Damodara it has been said: "Under the patronage of the king who treated him like his son, he wrote the *Gandhamadana* and a treatise on poetics in Sanskrit and Prakrit." But it is a wellknown fact that Bharavi has to his credit a single *kavya* work only, the *Kiratarjuniya*.

As regards Bharavi's date we are in a somewhat luckier position. Although scholars are not exactly unanimous, yet his date can be fixed within fairly certain limits.

Bharavi is mentioned along with Kalidasa in the Aihole inscription of Pulakesin II of the Western Chalukya dynasty, dated 634 A.D. (*saka* 556):

> May that Ravikirti be victorious, who, full of discernment, has used the abode of Jina, firmly built of stone, for a new treatment of his theme and who thus by his poetic skill has attained to the fame of Kalidasa and Bharavi.

A part of one of his verses has been quoted as an illustration in the famous *Kasika-vrtti* (about 650 A.D.) on Panini's *Astadhyayi*. Thus it becomes clear that he must be quite earlier than these dates, for a considerable period of time must

have elapsed before he could acquire enough fame and recognition to have his name mentioned beside Kalidasa or to be quoted in an authoritative commentary. On the other hand, there is no doubt about the fact that he was posterior to Kalidasa (about 400 A.D.), the intervening period being a good many years.

Of course, there is the fact of Bana's (first half of 7th century A.D.) silence regarding our poet, which appears to be somewhat extraordinary. In the introductory verses of his *Harsacarita*, Bana has paid tributes to his predecessors, poets and dramatists of repute. But no reference to Bharavi is to be found there. According to some, this indicates "that he can hardly have preceded him long enough for his fame to compel recognition". Others think, "but it need not be taken to imply Bharavi's contemporaneity or nearness of time to Bana".

In any case, it would not be unjustified perhaps to place Bharavi between 500 and 550 A.D.

Next comes the question of Bharavi's native country. Here again we are left with very little of conclusive evidence, and it would be fair not to be dogmatic.

The majority of the opinions seem to favour the view—probably first suggested by R. R. Bhagawat Sastri—that Bharavi belonged to Southern India. In the eighteenth and last canto of his work, the poet, while describing the futile blows of Arjuna on the mighty chest of disguised Siva, compares them to "the huge violent waves of the ocean which beat in vain against the sides of the Sahya mountain". Thus it is concluded, "The telling simile which describes vividly the scene at the Sahya mountain is some, if not a conclusive, proof that Bharavi was a poet from Southern India." As against this 'vigorous simile' and reference to the Sahya only in one instance, we have no doubt the whole of the fifth canto describing the Himalaya (in about fifty-two verses). But this is dismissed on the ground that "His description of the Himalaya is rather fanciful and he does not describe the intervening places when sending his hero to Indrakila, as Kalidasa has done in the *Meghaduta*. ...Had he been familiar with the northern regions he would hardly have let slip the splendid opportunity of describing the regions lying be-

tween the Dvaitavana and the Indrakila mountain while sending his hero there". It is also pointed out that the inscriptions relating to Bharavi all belong to the Western Deccan.

However, it is not that this view has gone unchallenged. Thus, Mahamahopadhyay Durgaprasada has contended that if a solitary reference to the Sahya is proof enough to make Bharavi a Southern poet, then, Ratnakara, the author of the *Haravijaya*, who has described mountains like Malaya, Sahya and Suvela and rivers like Kaveri, Godavari and Tamraparni, all situated in the Southern part of the country, should belong to that part, although it is an established fact that he was an inhabitant of Kashmir. In the same way, Bana should rather be considered a member of the Bhilla tribe inhabiting the Vindhya forest since he has described it in great details in his *Kadambari*.

But, then, Bharavi's use of a vigorous simile involving the Sahya mountain may have a different explanation also. It is not improbable that though not a native of the South he had gone there on some mission and on seeing the mighty ocean beating at the great mountain was so deeply impressed that he carried away a lasting vision of the scene and made use of it while composing the poem. It may be that at that time travel was difficult : still, it was not impossible and uncommon. As to the charge that the poet's description of the Himalaya is not so impressive, it may be noted that the matter is purely subjective. The poet himself is the sole authority to decide about what is to be described and in what manner. It is difficult to draw any specific or definite conclusion on the basis of such description alone.

Others think that Bharavi's description of the Himalaya is sufficient proof for his being a Northern poet—being a native of a country adjacent to the great mountain. It is pointed out that there is a place called Indrakila even today in the Northern end of what is now known as Sikkim and it was actually inhabited by the non-Aryan tribe known as Kirata. According to Bharavi's poem, Indrakila is the very place in which the crucial fight between Siva and Arjuna took place, and the former, himself disguised as a Kirata, was also assisted by the tribal army.

2

The Mahakavya

Before going into the actual work, we may briefly note the characteristic feature of the genre of poetical composition to which the works of Bharavi belongs.

Traditionally, according to one principle of classification, poetic compositions are divided as those which are to be watched (*drsya*) and as those which are to be listened to (*sravya*). One of the subdivisions of the latter is represented by a special form of sustained and elevated poetical composition, known as *mahakavya* or 'great poem' and Bharavi's *Kiratarjuniya* is one of the best specimens of it.

As S. K. De observes : "The *mahakavya* or 'great poem' is a poetical narrative of heroic characters and exploits, but it is not a work of the type of the Great Epics, the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*, which correspond to our sense of a heroic poem, but which are classified and distinguished as Itihasas. The eminence denoted by the prefix 'great' does not refer to the more primitive epic or heroic spirit nor to directness and simplicity, but rather to the bulk, sustained workmanship and general literary competence of these more sophisticated and deliberate productions. If an analogy is permissible, the *mahakavyas* stand in the same relation to the Great Epics as the work of Milton does to that of Homer."

One of the earliest authorities on rhetoric to describe the general features of such a composition was Dandin, the author of the *Kavyadarsa*. According to him :

> It should begin with a benediction, homage or indication of the subject-matter.
>
> The plot should be built either upon a legend, a romance or some historical fact, suggestive of how the four ends of life are to be attained, depicting the adventures of a hero, overflowing with wisdom and nobility.

Descriptions of the town, the sea, the mountain, the seasons, rising of the moon and sun, sports in pleasure-gardens or in tanks, drink-banquets, love-scenes, feasts, marriages, birth of a son, conferences, emissaries, war expeditions, battles and sieges by heroes, etc., go to the making of what it is an epic.

The epic should be embellished and elaborate ; it should be permeated by one basic sentiment (*rasa*) along with its corresponding emotion (*bhava*).

It shall consist of a number of cantos (*sarga*), not too long, composed in sonorous and sweetly composed verses.

There is no doubt that all these are rather extraneous features and not essential ones. Nor were these suggested or invented by the rhetoricians themselves ; these were only deduced from the works of the poets on the basis of empirical observation. Nevertheless, these were generalised by them into rules of universal application and the later generation of poets seems to adhere mechanically to these norms. These descriptions, no matter what their relevancy is, are inserted as a matter of conventional amplification and embellishment, and may even hold up and interrupt the story itself for considerable length : although in due time the poet may resume the thread of the main narrative.

"The motive for such adventitious matter is fairly obvious. It is meant to afford the poet unchartered freedom to indulge in his luxuriant descriptive talent and show off his skill and learning."

After these preliminaries let us now enter into the work itself.

3

The Story of the Kirata and Arjuna

The spy returns

Honouring the vow of twelve years' banishment, the Pandavas, with their wife Draupadi, are residing at the Dvaita forest.

Yudhisthira had appointed a spy to report on the deeds of Duryodhana—about his general rule and dealings with the subjects. The spy, a forester in the disguise of a Brahmacarin, came back, after gathering the necessary information. He was not a bearer of good news, for Duryodhana had won the hearts of the people. Still, he did not feel perturbed as he spoke to the eldest of the Pandavas, for those who really wish well do not indulge in pleasant untruths. The exiled king allayed his fear and bade him speak freely.

The spy makes his report

And with due respect and modesty the spy said :

"Spies are indeed the eyes of a king and masters should not be deceived by their own servants when true is put upon them. Please pardon me if my words appear unpleasant, for words both pleasant and wholesome are indeed rare. Would one be a true friend of the master if one does not advise him correctly ? Would one be a true master if one does not pay heed to the beneficient words of his subordinates ? In fact, when there is complete trust and agreement between the king and his subordinates, then only fortune smiles upon him. The ways of the kings are naturally inscrutable and incredibly stupid is the intellect of people like ourselves. It is only through your prowess and grace that I have been able to comprehend the intricate ways of your enemy.

Duryodhana is on the throne and you are wandering in the forest. Still, he is afraid of defeat from you. As such,

he is trying hard to win over the kingdom, acquired unjustly by a trick of dice, by the application of the righteous means. With a view to excelling you he is spreading far and wide his spotless fame through his numerous virtues. Indeed, enmity with the great, inducing as it does greatness in ourselves, is better than friendship with the low. He has subdued the group of six passions and is striving to tread on the difficult path prescribed by Manu. He toils hard night and day, spreading his prowess through judicious employment of diplomacy. He treats his subordinates as dear friends, friends as the nearest of kins, and free from pride, he behaves as if the royal power lies in the hands of his kinsmen. He pursues the three human ends, *dharma, artha* and *kama* without any partiality and they unitedly contribute to his fortune as if developing mutual friendship among themselves. He is discriminating in bestowing favour ; his bounty flows only after due consideration of merits. Self-controlled and impartial, he strikes at any deviation from the righteous path, whether on the part of an enemy or on the part of his very near ones, and in this, he is guided by neither greed nor anger. The four political expedients—*sama, dana, bheda* and *danda*—are so skillfully and judiciously employed by him that they bring forth ever-increasing prosperity as if vying with one another.

Cars and steeds of warrior-chieftains
Throng his palace halls around,
Tuskers sent by friendly monarchs
With their perfume fill the ground.
Kuru-lands are rich in harvests,
Ripening without tiller's toil.
Ask no rain, since Kuru's monarch
Showers his blessings on the soil.
And his rule of peace and plenty
Blesses towns and fertile fields !
And impregnate with his bounty
Earth her ample produce yields.
Chieftains from each town and castle,
Warriors famed in toil and strife,
Muster, not against their monarch,
But to guard him with their life.

He never bends his bow in battle ; nor does he ever frown in anger. Yet the kings, enchanted by his virtues, carry his order on the head like a garland of beautiful flowers. He has made Duhsasana the crown prince, his younger brother who is formidable with the advent of youth and he himself is tirelessly engaged in the performance of the stream of holy rites. He has conquered all the rival kings. He is ruling over a secure empire reaching upto the seas. But he is still apprehensive of danger from you. Enmity with the mighty is indeed full of disastrous consequences. If by any chance your name is ever mentioned in Duryodhana's presence, he immediately hangs down his head in pain—being reminded of Arjuna's courage and heroism—like a serpent under the overpowering magic of a spell.

Now, it is for you to decide and do what is needed. We simply gather information and that is where our duty begins and ends. We can report, but we cannot advice."

Draupadi remonstrates

Yudhisthira rewarded the spy and the spy departed. The king then met his younger brothers and wife Draupadi, and reported everything to them.

Draupadi was quick to react. She could hardly control her emotions and burst out in fury :

"To persons like you counsel given by a woman is sheer insult. Still, in this hour of calamity, I am forced to speak, regardless of decorum, because of a great mental agony. Your ancestors equalled Indra, the king of gods, in prowess and heroism and they held the entire earth under them for generations. But just like an elephant carelessly tossing away its adornment of garland you are throwing away the kingdom without exerting yourself to maintain it. Fools who do not practise deceit upon the deceitful court defeat only. Like a person without an armour, who is easily pierced by the sharp arrows of the enemy, they are caught unawares and destroyed by the opponent in no time. Like a charming and faithful wife adoring her husband because of his excellences, 'royal glory' has all along been attached to you because of your flawless political conduct. But, now, through your inaction, you are simply handing her over to the enemy.

It is strange that the flame of anger is not flaring up in you in spite of such dishonour and degradation. A man whose anger is not known to be futile is spontaneously respected by all. But a man who is forgiving is neither dreaded by the enemy nor endeared by the friend. You are not debasing yourself only. Just look at the plight of your mighty brothers !

> Sandal-graced was royal Bhima,
> Dust-besmeared he roams the hills.
> Scarce I know, O soul of virtue,
> If thy heart with pity thrills.
> Conqueror of northern nations,
> Arjuna scattered wealth and gold.
> Mark him now, O saintly hermit,
> Bark-clad, sleeping on the wold.
> And the twins, thy youngest brothers,
> Princes born and great and good.
> Mark them roaming in the jungle,
> Even like tuskers of the wood !

I am not of course in a position to follow the course of your thinking, for the workings of the mind are strange and varied. However, as I think of the calamity that has befallen you my heart goes to pieces in anguish.

Formerly, you spent the night in blissful slumber lying in the most expensive bed: in the morning you woke up listening to the sweet praise sung by the bards. But, now, you just lie down on wild ground overgrown with *kusa* grass, and on awakening, are greeted by the ominous howlings of jackals.

Formerly, this physical frame of yours was made handsomer and handsomer by the remnants of food partaken of by the Brahmins. But, now, your food consisting of only wild berries is making your body thinner and thinner along with your glory and fame.

Formerly, your feet resting on jewelled pedestals, were constantly tinged red with pollens dropping from the garlands on the heads of the princes as they bowed down. But, now, as you tread on the forest-grounds, your feet turn crimson.

pricked by the sharp end of the *kusa* grass after the hermits and animals have cropped it off.

You should therefore shake off this lethargy of peace and forgivenness, and exert yourself against the enemy. Victory through tranquility of the mind is right, not for the kings, but for the sages only. If even noble souls like you accept such humiliation contentedly, where would indeed the virtue of manliness find a residence?

Or, do you think that war is futile, and patience and forgiveness are the only means? Then, why don't you throw away the bow, wear matted locks and engage yourself in worshipping the fire? It is no use waiting on the ground that you have to honour the agreement made, for an enemy bent on deceit is to be met by deceit. Nothing is unfair in war and ambitious kings do not have any scruples. They march on somehow laying the blame for breach of agreement on the enemy himself. Therefore—

> Fettered by oath, and pale through glory lost,
> Of power bereft, on seas of troubles tossed,
> Arise, O king, thy mighty foemen quell,
> As wakes the sun, night's darkness to dispel."

Bhima speaks out for Draupadi

Draupadi's cry of war and retaliation was welcomed by Bhima and he rose to speak for it, urging Yudhisthira to take immediate action. He said:

"What the dignified lady has just spoken, considering rightly all the points, is really admirable and, I think, even the lord of speech, Brhaspati, would have been incapable of expressing the matter so nicely. The science of politics is as inaccessible as a vast and deep lake; it can be entered into only with the help of a guide, but such a guide is indeed rare. It is therefore astonishing that our beloved wife has spoken like an expert. Her words may be lesser in quantity, but they are certainly greater in quality. They are highly pregnant with implications and ultimately beneficent, though they may not be welcome to one who has lost the spirit. They are like a highly potent medicine, applied in a small dose, annoying to one losing strength, but salutory in the long run. I

sincerely hope that you will not turn a deaf ear to these charming words, for a wise man judges a speech on its own merit remaining indifferent to the status of the speaker.

Because of your proficiency in the four branches of learning, the discriminating faculty has reached the highest point of excellence in you. But how is it that now your discerning intellect has lost its power like an elephant sinking into a mire ? Your courage and heroism drew the admiration of even the gods. But now you are brought down to this deplorable condition by the enemy. What can be more lamentable ? The prosperity of an enemy may be tolerated if it is sure to bring him down. But not even a great calamity of an enemy should be overlooked if it is sure to make him rise. The rise of the enemy, whether in prosperity or in distress, is always to be nipped in the bud.

Royal fortune very soon deserts a king who indifferently watches the enemy grow in power, as if afraid of public censure that she is living with an imbecile king. A king even though fallen in difficult circumstances is respected by his subjects if they find him striving to regain his lost glory, just as people adore even the slender piece of moon on the first day of a fortnight knowing that it will soon shine in all its brilliance. The root of a king's power of treasury and army is the right determination of the five constituents of policy. But that again is dependent upon prompt and energetic action only. For a high-spirited man desirous of attaining a lofty position the only means that can prevent his downfall is said to be valour. Calamities overwhelm one without courage ; future forsakes one smitten by calamities ; one without future sinks deep in degradation, and one lost in degradation cannot be the abode of royal fortune. Therefore, do away with this inaction.

Of course, it may be argued that we should wait till the expiry of the period agreed upon. But that does not seem advisable to me. The cunning nature of the sons of Dhrtarastra is proved beyond doubt. How can it be expected that they will honestly hand back the kingdom after enjoying royal power for such a long time ? Or, let us assume that they will be good enough to give it back to you. But would it be honorable for you to receive it as a kind gift from the

enemy? How much would be the shame of your brothers known far and wide for courage and heroic feats? A great man brings down the world under his feet by his own might. A lion feeds on mighty tuskers only after he has himself killed them. A man of self-respect does not hesitate to barter away this perishable life for imperishable fame. Fame is their primary aim; wealth is nothing but a secondary attainment. People tread upon a heap of ashes, but not on the blazing fire. A self-respecting man may easily part with life in case of dishonour, but not with his dignity under any circumstnces. Why does the mighty lion charge at the roaring clouds? It is just the nature of the great that they cannot put up with the superiority of others. Therefore, set your heart upon the destruction of the enemy and exert yourself. Calamities are waiting to pounce upon the enemy, but they are only discouraged by your lack of enthusiasm. Tell me, who has the power and audacity to stand against your four brothers when they charge like the four mighty elephants guarding the four directions or like the four vast oceans pervading the four quarters?

O King! Strike without delay. Let the ever-burning fire of dishonour in your heart, lighted by the enemy, be put out for good by the perennial flow of tears from the eyes of the enemies' wives."

Yudhisthira replies

After listening to these agitated words of Bhima, the eldest of the Pandavas, as if pacifying an elephant running amuck, said:

"In these words of yours, pure, charming and free from fallacies, your honest intention is clearly reflected, as an object in a mirror, bright, polished and free from dirt. These words are conspicuous for their clarity: depth of meaning adorns them; they are free from unnecessary repetition, and taken together they make a very coherent sense. Strong arguments have been given and the inferences are not contradicted. Speakers of such merit are indeed quite rare.

However, I am still in search of a decision, for I am not fully satisfied. The problems of a king are so manifold and intricate that it is very difficult to decide upon a particular

course of action. One should not perform any act rashly. One who acts without circumspection becomes the supreme abode of all calamities. Wealth is allured only by qualities, and offers welcome to one who acts after due deliberation. One who works patiently as if after sprinkling the seeds of duties with the water of deliberation reaps a rich harvest of success like a wise farmer in the autumn. True knowledge of Sastra adorns the person; its glory is furthered by self-restraint; timely display of valour becomes an ornament for self-restraint and valour has for its embillishment success brought on by the application of the right policy. Like a lamp in the dark, the true knowledge of Sastra points to the right direction in the baflling task of determing the exact duty.

Anger is the worst vice for an ambitious king; one should not be overwhelmed by anger. A king, truly wise, carefully considers the possibility of success—success that will last and will not wither away—and achieves his end by making use of the most favourable means. Just as the sun rises after dispelling the darkness of the night by its rays so does a man after conquering anger by wisdom. Just as the dark fortnight takes away all the digits of the moon so does ignorance born of anger take away all one's wealth and power. A king who is neither mild only nor severe only, but becomes mild or severe according as circumstances demand rules over the earth like the sun varying in the seasons. Fortune is as fickle as the autumn cloud and the senses are as difficult to tame as wicked horses. Indeed, for one without forbearance, it is difficult to retain royal glory for long.

It is essential to control the passions. Even a well-versed man, if he has no self-control, is soon parted with his glory and power. Anger takes away one's power of judgement; one cannot determine the proper time and means: it leads one away from success, to be attained only by the adoption of sound policy. There is nothing as efficacious as forgiveness. It is conducive to future prosperity, a great source of success in all enterprises and an unfailing means for the annihilation of enemies.

The great Yadavas will never side with Duryodhana, for they have natural affection for us. For the present, they are

being apparently friendly with him only to gain their own purpose in the end. An untimely attack by us—before the expiry of the agreed limit of time—will definitely win the kings over to the enemy's side. Moreover, patience will bring its own reward. It would not be difficult to sow dissension among the kings, for Duryodhana, puffed up with vanity, is sure to offend them. He is now behaving modestly with all only with a view to consolidating his own position. This temporary modesty would only serve to augment his ultimate haughtiness. Foolishness never parts with a haughty king, and a fool is led astray quite easily, and one straying from the right course is deserted by people in general. One having patience can uproot, in time, even a formidable enemy weakened by internal discontent, just like a mighty tree shaken to the roots by a strong wind. Even a small spark of fire due to the friction of a tree's branches may burn down the whole mountain, and even a minor revolt due to dissatisfaction in the vital constituents of the kingdom may bring down the king. A wise man remains unperturbed by the prosperity of an enemy who has discarded modesty. For the immodest are easily vanquished as his wealth and power lead him into calamities only. Just as the current of a river sweeps away the loose banks, broken through inside and outside, so also an ambitious king takes away the kingdom of one whose households is torn by dissension and dissatisfaction."

Vedavyasa arrives and Yudhisthira pays his respects

As the deliberation was thus going on, there arrived, all on a sudden, the great sage Vyasa, as if the desire incarnate of Yudhisthira, inducing calmness, by his mere sight, even in the birds and beasts, encircled in brilliance pleasing to the eyes and destroying all sins, the veritable source of all that is good and an embodied form of all virtues. The king stood up and honoured him and sat down again with his permission. His lips illumined by a bright smile and seated before the sage shedding lustre all around, he looked like the moon shining in all its glory just in front of the lustrous Brhaspati.

The sage became seated ; yet he looked loftier, for the brilliant rays of his body moved upwards. His dark body adorned with bright yellow matted hair looked like a cloud

with the flash of lightning. His graceful and serene form, indicating the extreme purity of his mind, filled with affection the hearts of strangers even. His tender, confidence-inspiring eyes offered welcome to everybody.

Then, Yudhisthira, eager to know the purpose of the visit, said :

"Like a shower from the cloudless sky, this unexpected appearance of yours predicts the attainment of something good and auspicious. All the sacrificial rites performed by me bear fruit today, and all the blessings of the Brahmins come true. By this visit of yours I acquire for ever the greatest honour in the world. The very sight of you showers prosperity, destroys all sins, fulfills all the human ends and spreads fame. Indeed, what good is it no productive of ? Even the rays of the moon shedding ambrosia could not comfort my eyes, but as I look at you now they are soothed. Now, my mind free from the pangs of separation from my own people breathes freely once again. It is useless to enquire about the object of your visit. For what indeed can we do for one who is beyond all worldly desires ? Still, I am prompted to speak only by a strong desire to hear some auspicious words from your lips ?"

Vedavyasa's advice and blessings

And Vyasa replied :

"Undoubtedly, one aspiring after fame in this world and the other should treat all his friends impartially, and this is all the more true for an ascetic like myself. Still, my heart is particularly captivated by you because of your excellences. Even the liberated, free from all desires, cannot help being partial to the righteous. Are you not like sons to King Dhrtarastra ? Have you not excelled his own sons in qualities ? How is it then that he has abandoned you ? His lust for enjoyment has cast a veil of ignorance upon him. He is sure to come to grief, for he has association with the wicked—in case of doubt he takes counsel from people like Karna.

The assembly of the enemy swerved from the righteous path (when Draupadi was dishonoured in public), but you remained calm and unmoving. This adherence to the righteous path even in the hour of extreme calamity shows your supreme regard for *dharma*. Judicious restraint is the backbone of

your character. Trying to harm you the enemy has harmed none but their own selves. Bringing to light your sagacity and strength of character they have acted like friends in disguise. Yet war is inevitable ; you have to win back the kingdom by force. The opponent is quite superior in army and arms. You should now endeavour to acquire greater supremacy in this regard. The goddess of victory smiles invariably upon the stronger.

Is there anybody (on your side) bold enough not to run away at the sight of the mighty bow moving in the hands of Bhisma who seems to have put to shame death-god even ? Who will stand against Drona, when, burning with anger, he pours blazing showers of arrows in battle like the fiire of cosmic dissolution raging with flames shooting up ? What will one do at the sight of Karna who has mastered the use of weapons by propitiating Jamadagnya, whose angry countenance immediately takes away the courage of others and strikes into the heart of death-god even a terror unknown and undefined ?

O King, you are truly worthy of a boon. So I have come to impart to Arjuna a great *vidya*, sought after for success even by gods. Practising by means of it the severest of penances he will win the Pasupata weapon from Lord Pasupati, and defeat the mighty opponents."

Yudhisthira then called upon Arjuna to act according to instruction, and he approached the sage with due humility. The *vidya* coming from the lips of the great sage, glowing as a spark of fire, went into the mouth of Arjuna, just as the bright rays of the sun enter, at the advent of the day, into an opening lotus. And the sage said to Arjuna : "By this *yoga* imparted to you by me you will acquire more power, and taking up arms, without letting anyone intrude into your path, you should live the life of an ascetic. To propitiate Indra, you will practice severe penance in the Indrakila mountain and a Yaksa will take you there in an instant."

Gloom over Pandava household on Arjuna's imminent departure

The sage disappeared and directly there appeared the Yaksa and bowed down to Arjuna.

As Arjuna made preparations for departure, a gloom slowly entered into the hearts of the Pandavas like darkness gradually moving into the arbours of Sumeru mountain when the sun leaves it in the morning. But because of their natural firmness of mind and wrath against the enemy and also the importance of the mission, they soon overcame it.

Draupadi however was too perturbed and could hardly control her emotions. Inspite of a fervent desire to look at Arjuna intently, she could not fully open her tearful eyes, like lotuses bound by frost, afraid that tears would roll down and it would augur ill for him. So Arjuna received her longing, loving looks as a parting gift for the journey. Losing all sense of fortitude and somehow restraining the flow of tears, Draupadi said in a choked voice :

"You are now our saviour, you will bring back the glory taken away by the enemy. So long as you do not succeed in your penance you must not lose the tranquility of mind thinking about us, for it is an essential precondition for success in any mission. The indignity suffered by me in the assembly was connived at by the elders and kings as an internal family feud, but it succeeded in bringing down your fame stretching over the earth like a canopy. This barbarous act upon me has wiped away your reputation as if it did never exist. Even the memory is painful, and as regards the actual experience the less said the better. Till now it was a thing of the past. But this imminent separation from you is bringing forth the same agony to my mind once again.

"Your pride is hurt : you resemble a tusker with broken tusks. Your valour has been overshadowed by that of the enemy ; you resemble a morning darkened by autumn clouds. You are out of action ; even your shining weapons do not lend lustre to you. Like a dried up lake you lead a shameful life with all your glory vanishing. Just look at me. My locks are defiled by Duhsasana. I have no protector. I have nothing to fall back upon except fate. Does not all this cast a slur on your fame and heroism ? Are you the same Arjuna ?

"A true *ksatriya* is one who protects the righteous from dangers, and a true *karmuka* (bow) is one which proves its usefulness in action in a battle. But if one carries them regardless of the significance one becomes guilty of making the

terms meaningless. Like elephants ruffling the manes of a lion taken unawares, enemies have overpowered you because of unmindfulness (and not lack of strength). But just like day going to the sun for glory this noble task awaits you considering you the fittest person. If by your own capability, you can bring this mission to success, your name will be declared the first and foremost for manliness and courage in every assembly. Naturally, you are anxious for your dear and near ones. But I assure you there is no cause for anxiety. Surely Indra, the lord of gods, will remove all the obstacles when you depart for victory. Therefore, follow the sage's instruction, act without delay and turn all our hopes into reality. I shall eagerly wait for the moment when you will come back with flying colours and receive the closest embrace from me."

Arjuna departs

As Arjuna listened, the memory of past indiginities freshly arose in his mind and glowing in anger he looked like the sun blazing in the Northern quarter. As if the enemies appeared in person before his eyes. Dhaumya, the family priest, enlivened his weapons with *mantra* and Arjuna, though normally graceful, looked fearsome and formidable. The wounds on his body inflicted by Indra's thunderbolt (at the time of burning the Khandava forest) were covered by his brilliance and his jewel-bedecked armour looked like a region of the sky studded with stars.

Arjuna proceeded in the safe path as indicated by the Yaksa, and the ascetics of Dvaitavana were in tears for a moment. The sound of heavenly drums filled the quarters and flowers showered from heaven. The ocean, wild with joy, embraced the earth with its rolling waves, as if to communicate the happy tidings that she would soon be free of all the evils.

Beauty of the autumn

Coming out in the open, Arjuna saw autumn in full glory all around him. The earth, yellow with ripe corns and surrounded by groups of pleasantly cackling swans, looked like a young lady at the advent of youth with a ringing girdle. Lands at the outskirts of villages were full of *sali*

plants bending down with fruits. Nowhere was there any trace of mud, and there was no water that was not smiling with blooming lotuses. He was happy at the thought that autumn has made a gift of its glory to him. Bright little *saphari* fish were darting about in the water of the lakes which were looking on in wonder with their lotus-eyes wide open. To Arjuna, the sparkling movement of fish appeared more charming than the side glance of a beloved. In the fields, in the water, the beauty of the *kalma* plants was enhanced by the beauty of the lotuses. It pleased Arjuna very much, for the association of excellences is welcomed by all. Sometimes masses of foam were floating and pollens were strewn all over, and the water could not be seen. But as Arjuna wondered if he was looking at ground-lotuses the truth was revealed by the sudden leap of silvery little fish.

There was the lady watching over the corn : between the interval of her eyebrows was placed a *bandhuka* flower, charming with minute pollen-dust ; she was as if trying to match its beauty with her tender lips reddened with lac. Around her large breasts were scattered lotus-pollens as red as the young sun, and these again were made all the more beautiful by the flowing sweat. Even the lotus adorning her forehead had its charm enhanced by the brilliance of her eyes. All this led Arjuna to conclude that autumn was truly crowned with the highest success. He saw some cowherdesses busy in churning the milk. Dishevelled hair playing over their faces looked like moving bees. Teeth, slightly visible as they smiled, were tinged with the rays of the dancing ear-rings, and looked like petals. The faces looked like lotuses touched by the rays of the young sun. Sometimes they stopped their breath and the lips quivered ; they looked all the more beautiful like a creeper having one or two of its leaves trembling.

Cows were returning from the pastures of late night, but they could not walk fast. They were very anxious for their calves and from their large udders milk flowed out of its own accord. A big buli after its victory over the opponent—another bull of same proportions—ran wild, bellowing loudly and digging the river bank and appeared like pride assuming a physical body. Because of the turning of the churning rods the jars of milk trembled again and again, giving out deep

sounds as of drums, and it made the peacocks in the yard restless.

Thus proceeded Arjuna, smoothly and happily.

Yaksa's appreciation

Now, the Yaksa as he watched Arjuna, spoke, though not asked to do so, for a man who understands the signs does not remain silent at the right moment. He said :

"Let this autumn, with its clear water and clouds relieved of water, bountiful as good fortune and filling the earth with corns, enhance the glory of your victory. Rows of cranes beautifully white are not flying ; masses of clouds with colourful rainbows are not rising ; yet, the autumnal sky looks charming. Indeed, a thing naturally beautiful does not need an extraneous adornment. Peacocks' cries have lost their charm ; they now only hurt the ears ; the ears have therefore turned to the maddening swans' cackle. One is indeed endeared by excellences and not by more familiarity. Clusters of corn, yellow with ripening, are bending down as if to enjoy the fragrance of lotuses blooming in the bed of the field. The lotus-plants are green ; the lotus-petals are red ; and the tips of *kalama* are yellow. The water has taken up all the hues and appears like a melting rainbow. The aerial path is cool with floating water-particles. Flashes of lightning no longer dazzle the eyes. White pieces of cloud have taken off the heat. The air carrying the fragrance of lotuses has made it all the more enjoyable. Swans, cackling with pleasure, are flying in all directions ; it appears that the quarters are conversing with one another. The songs of the cowherds' maids surpass in excellence even the cries of peacocks. The deer, enchanted by them, have lost the desire for food—they do not move towards the corn. The stalk of *kalama* is bowing down his head to the lotus, but she is not paying any heed to him. So, growing thinner and thinner, he is turning yellow like a man pining away at separation from the beloved. Swarms of bees, carried away by the wind—fragrant with lotus-pollens and cool with water-particles—are unable to keep direction like miscreants chased by the guardians of law. The parrots have bodies as tender as *sirisa* flowers, and holding the yellow

stalk of *kalama* with their coral-red beaks, they are stealing the beauty of the rainbow."

The great mountain appears

Presently Arjuna saw at hand the great Himalaya, like a giant mass of white cloud, blocking by its height even the rays of the sun. At the bottom it was dark by the dense forests in the valley, and above it was white by the ever-accumulating snow. It reminded Arjuna of Halayudha, with a blue garment on, but without the crimson hue of drinks. As he went nearer he wondered : "Why is it soaring so high ? To surpass the Meru mountain ? Or, to have a clear view of the ends of quarters ? Or, to traverse and exhaust the expanse of the sky ?"

Part of the mountain was brightened by the sun's rays and part of it was in perennial darkness. So it looked like god Siva, clad in elephant-skin, dispelling the darkness in front by his loud laughter. All kinds of people were there—inhabitants of earth, sky and heaven. But never did they come across one another. As if to show off his mightiness Siva has created in it another miniature world. Its peaks, touching the sky, were as white as the Sesa serpent, and its ridges were marked with gold lines : so they appeared like mass of autumnal clouds with streaks of lightning. Pouring forth their water exhaustively, clouds had now turned white ; there is neither the flash of lightning nor the roaring sound. As they hung on the ridges they looked like newly grown wings of the mountain.

There were rubies, glowing red, like freshly blooming *japa* flowers, and their rays reflected in the valleys of gold as if brought down the crimson dusk there. The great Himalaya was abounding in multitudes of large *kadamba* flowers. So many groves of *tamala* trees, embracing one another and shedding constantly drops of ice cold water, were there. Herbs of mighty elephants in rut roamed them. There was not a summit which was not full of gems : not a single cave which was without a creeper-bower : not a single stream which was without groups of lotuses, and not a single tree which was not glorious with flowers. The water of the streams was agitated

by the firm buttocks of the heavenly maidens, and snakes, fond of creepers and *bakula* flowers, pervaded all the regions.

The lake Manasa, eternally pure and adorned with blooming lotuses and flocks of swans, the Pramathas, the ever-faithful attendants of Siva and even Siva himself, occasionally quarrelling with Parvati angry for some reasons—had all this very mountain for their abode. This mountain abounded in plants and herbs, which, by their natural glow, brightened up the planets and the aerial cars of the gods, and this reminded the Pramathas every night of the burning of Tripuri. The Ganges, flowing through the high ridges of the mountain and dashing against stones, raised a sheet of minute water-particles and looks like one holding a white *camara* fan.

Yaksa describes the great mountain

Arjuna was speechless in wonder, but the Yaksa started speaking pleasantly. Indeed, talkativeness is welcome at the desired moment. [The Yaksa said :]

"With its numerous peaks white with snow, the Himalaya is dividing the sky thousandfold and its mere sight is capable of doing away with the accumulated sins of people. Like the true nature of the highest self, very little of its interior, formidable and inaccessible, can be known. The earth has surpassed in glory both heaven and nether world because of the possession of this mountain, full of immense wealth—can be acquired by only the righteous and the fortunate—coveted even by Kuvera. I think, even the three worlds taken together cannot equal it, for it is the permanent abode of god Siva whose majesty is unknowable and unthinkable. For those who aspire after the highest human end of liberation it is one of the most ideal place to attain the means, true knowledge.

There are the couches of heavenly maidens, reddened by the touch of their feet coloured with lac, flowers disarranged and crushed all over, indicating only their ardent love-sport. Just as all wealth goes to a king following the right path so also all herbs grow in this mountain adored by the world. The spots on the tree-trunks where the heavenly elephants have rubbed their temples are made fragrant by the rut-flow and beset with swarm of bees. Smelling like freshly blooming mango blossoms they are enrapturing the cuckoos even though

it is not spring. Here residences are the charming creeper-bowers ; lamps are the glowing herbs ; beds are the accumulations of fresh *haricandana* leaves ; and the fatigure of love-sport is taken away by air pleasant from contact with lotuses ; so the heavenly maids no longer think of going back to heaven. In this very mountain, Bhava (Siva) took hold of Bhavani's hand with his own hand with sweating finger-tips, after she had practised long penance under water. Here the glow of the walls of crystal and silver, as white as swans, extended more by the reflected sun's rays and mingled with the bluish hue of sapphires produces again and again the notion of moonlight even at noon. From the innumerable crystals innumerable rays soar high up in the sky and mingle with the sun's rays ; thus, the popular notion that the sun possesses only a thousand rays is falsified.

Here, in Kailasa, Kuvera has built for the pleasure of Siva, a city with the loftiest gateways and blocking as it does the path of the sun it brings down dusk untimely. Here the intermediate spaces between the valleys are filled with the rising, dense, glow of various gems and there arises the notion of a wall : but the truth is immediately revealed by the unimpeded flow of the wind through it. The beauty of regions covered with fresh grass never fades : lotus creepers perenially shed greenish lustre : leaves of trees adorned with variegated flowers never wither away. Taking the glow of the emeralds—as soft and green as a just-born parrot—for a patch of fresh grass, the deer went to it, but came back soon realising the mistake : now, mingled with the sun's rays it is growing more than ever. The pollen-dust rising from the clusters of blooming lotuses, scattered all over the sky by the wind, is assuming a circular shape and looks like a beautiful golden parasol. The great bull of Siva, its body glowing white and bent, being engaged in playfully striking against a bank, is moving from one peak to another—creating the illusion for the maidens that the moon is rising. Now, in autumn, clouds, deficient in water, have broken into smaller pieces and the rainbows are unable to attain a full form by themselves ; but the deficiency is made up by the rays emitted from the numerous multi-coloured gems at the peaks. Darkness can never overcome this mountain, for the digit of the moon adorning the matted

mass of hair of god Siva floods the forests in white even in the dark fortnight. This mountain, full of golden caves and spreading over every wood a golden glow like a vast mantle, is very dear to your father, Indra.

Although you are gentle by nature, you should follow the path of a *ksatriya*, as advised by the great sage Vyasa; practise penance tirelessly with arms in hand, for even in the noblest of missions one is not free from harms inflicted by enemies. Let not your senses go astray like wild horses. When you are in grief let god Siva provide you inspiration. Let the guardians of the worlds enhance your power of penance and crown this noble mission with success.'

Left alone, Arjuna goes up Indrakila

With these pleasant words, the Yaksa diappeared in a moment and Arjuna was plunged into anxious thought, for separation from a friend is always painful.

Finally, Arjuna took up residence in the Indrakila mountain. Like Visnu ascending on Garuda, Arjuna went up the golden ridge of Indrakila, his eyes turned towards the Ganges. Trees, like royal bards, welcomed him with songs of bees and from the tips of branches swaying in the wind showered flowers upon him. The wind fragrant, because it was full of lotus-pollens and cool, because it passed through the waves of the Ganges, embraced him like an affectionate friend. Arjuna was delighted to hear the roar of water dashing against the rising rocks, which mingled with the cackles of aquatic birds, appeared like the sound of a trumpet. He was also delighted to look at the reeds at the edge of water bending down to the high and long pine submerged in water, like the weak submitting to the strong even though in distress. He feasted his eyes on the multitude of swans which, reddened by lotus-pollens, floated beautifully in the waves and spread over the water without leaving any gap, and appeared like the breast-cover of the Ganges. Yet Arjuna became all the more attached to the bank with its various spots broken into by mighty tuskers where swarms of bees delighted in the rut, for the great, even though in suffering, remains great. The large waves near the golden valleys turned golden themselves; the Cakravaka was lost in them and the Cakravaki could not find

him, and started to wail piteously. This instantly won Arjuna's heart, for an instance of true love is admired by all.

The glow which tinged the dancing waves with so many hues led Arjuna to infer the gems submerged in water, like external expression leading to the inference of internal emotion. The foam, carried a top by waves striking against the rocks and as white as the wind-tossed tip of *ketaka,* appeared like the laughter of the heavenly river. The innumerable drops of rut on the water, like dark blue spots on the peacock's plume, appeared to be a thousand eyes opened by the river for looking at the mighty tusker entering into it. On the sandy bank Arjuna saw the lady-like oyster with lips slightly parted on awakening from sleep and spreading out the lustre of pearl which looked like flowing tears. The leaves of coral-creepers under the clear water, spotted by specks of foam, reminded one of the beloved's lips shining with the rays of teeth. With great wonder Arjuna saw a serpent coming out of the water which being driven high into the sky by its forceful hissing spread like the white autumnal clouds. Arjuna crossed the smaller streams which had the spurt of little bish for beautiful eyes and were moving slowly to meet the Ganges like dear amorous friends with heavy hips.

Ascending the summit of the mountain Arjuna found a clear spot surrounded by trees—their tops bending down with the weight of flowers, and its very sight calmed down his mind. The valleys abounded in creepers full of flowers and the forests were all pure and lonely : as if the Indrakila cordially invited him to start his penance there. Taking up Yoga practices and controlling the mind, he engaged himself in penance : though it was not anything easily accomplished, he did not feel any fatigue or suffering, for nothing can exhaust a self-possessed man. He tamed all the senses, drew them away from objects of enjoyment, acquired true knowledge and attained perennial tranquility of mind. Practising deep meditation, muttering the spells respectfully and bowing down according to rules—performing the prescribed acts through mind, speech and body—he sought to attain Indra, the king of gods : thus, the sentiments of both the heroic and the quietitude simultaneously resided in him. The body of Arjuna was as greenish as emerald and his matted hair turned

yellow from regular ritual bathing ; he looked like a *tamala* tree, its top touched by the early sun's rays. He carried weapons, but had no evil intention, for his mind was free and pure. By his pious acts he put even the sages into shame. Even animals were influenced by his excellence and all nature came forward to help him. The wind was favourable, gentle and sweet-scented. The sun's rays had no intensity of heat, they were bright but pleasing to the touch. The tall trees bent down to him as if offering handful of new shoots. The dust of the ground on which he used to lie was washed away by drops of water coming down from the sky and soft, green, fresh grass spread over it. Arjuna, though emaciated, was greatly delighted. Although he saw before him the sure and auspicious sign of success in penance—blooming flower, yet he showed no sign of wonder, for a self-controlled man never loses his natural tranquility.

Foresters report to Indra

Within a few days, due to the severe practice of austerities, Arjuna's majesty and power grew to such an extent that the foresters became gravely concerned and went to Indra to make a report. They said :

'A man, clad in bark, removing darkness like the sun, is practising penance in your mountain, heating up the whole world. His arms look like two huge serpents and his long bow strikes terror into the heart of enemies. His pure and exemplary conduct puts to shame the sages even. Overpowered by his excellence, even the material elements are serving him : air is plesant, earth is full of fresh grass, sky is clear and dust is washed away by rain. Like disciples with their preceptor, the animals, overcoming their natural enmity, are staying in harmony and peace in his company. When he goes to collect flowers, trees bend down of their own accord. What more, even this mountain is as loyal to him as it is to you. His uncommon strength is indicated by absence of fatigue in spite of hard labour. His massive form declares sure victory. He is gentle by nature, yet the world is apprehensive of him for his inner dignity. We are unable to ascertain his identity—whether he belongs to the lineage of sages, demons

or kings. Please pardon us that we are only reporting according to our capability.'

Indra addresses heavenly maidens

With this news of his beloved son's excellences Indra was much pleased, though he showed no outward sign. He was sure of Arjuna's firmness of mind ; still, in order to test his concentration, he called in the heavenly maidens, and said to them :

'There is no better weapon than yourselves to strike into the heart of one—very tender, without any equal, infinitely minute, hitting even from a distance and unfailing in any circumstances. Even the highest knowledge of the greatest sage is rendered useless simply by your side-glances. Collecting together all the fine particles of beauty from every object of the world the creator created you in ancient time. It is only for your presence that people hanker after residence in heaven. Taking along the Gandharvas, well-versed in the various arts, you go and create obstacles to Arjuna's penance. You can win over even one who has conquered all desire. So this man will be an easy victim, for he is not free from desire. He is striving for purpose, for subdueing his enemies, which proves his attachment. There is no apprehension of a curse either as in the case of sages. This man is a valiant warrior and will never be hostile to a woman.'

As they were thus eulogised and honoured by the master in the presence of gods, the radiance of the heavenly maidens grew more and more, and they departed from the abode of Indra. Looking at that pretty group, bending down from the burden of the breasts, their beauty as glorious as unmoving lotuses, Indra failed to reach satisfaction even with his thousand eyes.

Gandharvas and maidens depart for Arjuna's hermitage

The departure of the maidens, escorted by Gandharvas, with beautifully decorated chariots and elephants, was proclaimed by the roar of drums, amplified all the more as it passed through the various cavities of the chariots. Shaken by a hostile wind and unable to open fully their lotus-like eyes

for fatigue, the reddish hue of their faces, produced by the heat of the sun, appeared to be the reddishness of love. Due to the special power of gods, the chariots did not fall down. They moved very fast and the wheels appeared to be unmoving. They looked like the gods' mansions hanging in the sky. Drops of sweat appearing from fatigue spoiled the cosmetics on the breasts and the decorative marks on the forehead ; yet like a string of pearls they enhanced the beauty of their forms. Shining like burning meteors in the sky, like the golden streaks on touchstones, the banners moved as if extending their length more and more by the crimson hue. Discovering that the tender bodies of the heavenly maidens were capable of enduring the extreme heat of the sun, the Gandharvas realised that the creator's variety in creations was conducive to good effects also. The heavenly elephants were adorned with red lead. Their girdles were fettered with chains of gold. They poured out rut through all the seven cavities. So they looked like pieces of cloud tinged with red by the early sun, pouring down rains and showing streaks of lightning. The army of Indra moved away from the unbearable sun and reached the beautiful Mandakini river looking like the solitary braid of hair on a young maiden. Lotus-pollens, scattered in profusion by swarms of intoxicated bees, made the air fragrant and the waves of the heavenly river cooled it ; so it took away the weariness of the ladies. The mighty waves of the heavenly river agitated by the plunging of elephants and horses rose high upto the chariots in the sky and turned back perhaps for the first time finding obstruction. Clouds, though rent by the long tusks, delighted the elephants greatly by pouring down rains, for it is the nature of the great to do good even to one who may hurt him. Time and again the wind blew away the garments from the maidens' loins ; so the task of covering the bareness fell upon the dense rays of the gems set in the girdle. The clouds, in spite of washing away the decorations and cosmetics, delighted the maidens and earned their gratitude, for a smaller harm cannot subdue a greater good. The clouds, being without water, looked like sandy beaches spotted with waves and the rainbows appeared to be fragmentary ; nevertheless, their forms were completed by the rays of gems adorning the bodies of the maidens.

Deliberating upon the course of action that would lead to success of the mission and traversing the path of the winged ones the army reached the Indrakila with its valleys covered by clouds. Faces of the maidens shone like lotuses, numerous upraised white parasols appeared as mass of foam and the deep sound of drums resembled the roar of water; the army as it alighted upon the summit of Indrakila looked like the heavenly river. The rows of cloud as if formed a bridge, and the horses with the forepart of their bodies bent due to the restraining of the halter brought down the running chariots to earth with great difficulty. Pieces of cloud descended from the sky and got attached to the sides of elephants; they then appeared like great mountains, submerged in water, with their wings fixed. High up on the mountain the path was uneven; yet due to their skill in running the horses ran evenly. But on the sandy river banks their footsteps showed in a straight line from beginning to end. The roar of the descending falls mingled with the deep sound of the chariots, and the peacocks, taking it for the rumbling of clouds, lifted up their necks in expectation. The mass of water falling down from the summit turned blue, absorbing the rays of sapphires in the valley and looked like a loose piece of the sky. Like the murky water of the Ganges at the beginning of rains, the army, thickly covered with reddish dust raised by the chariot-wheels, scattered all over the deep forests.

Then the Gandharvas selected spots for residence on the Ganges, brightened by the rays of gems, strewn with flowers naturally dropped and green with dense growth of grass. The beautiful camp of the Gandharva army enhanced the charm of the mountain all the more, for even a chance meeting with the great heightens one's glory. The beauty of trees with fragrant flowers, the charm of lonely regions and the glory of creepers with new leaves—all reached the height of fulfilment being enjoyed by the maidens, for true beauty consists in sacrificing oneself for the benefit of others. Very much fatigued as the maidens were they did not go to the sandal trees with leaves trembling with the breath of serpents embracing them, just like one shunning the company of a good man even surrounded by the low and wicked. To relieve the fatigue of the elephants, their experienced keepers removed

from them the flags, seats and armours ; they then looked like mountains with the forests devasted by the winds at the final end of creation. As the elephants moved after awakening from sleep due to the fatigue of a long journey, the rows of bees feasting around in the rut became scattered and looked like the broken chains of the animals. One of the elephants, bent upon going to the other bank made fragrant by the rut-flow of wild elephants, was thwarted by the river's water and in spite of being pierced on the head by the hook paid no heed to the keeper. Another elephant looked about angrily with rolling eyes on the other bank for an opponent as he smelt the water scented with the wild elephant's rut and though thirsty, went away without drinking. The elephants plunged into Ganges' water and with their rut made it fragrant ; but the marks of rut-flow on their bodies were concealed by reddish lotus-pollens and their temples were as sweet-scented as the lotuses. Extending over the banks due to the sudden plunge of elephants, the water, mixed with the dark dust raised by the army as well as the pollens of lotuses trampled over by elephants, looked like a garment dyed with *manjistha* (Indian madder). Their hind leg and the neck were bound ; they moved their limbs among the *aguru* trees ; and the rut flowed in profusion ; so the elephants looked like huge rocks dripping water and slipping from the mountain. The dust was settled down by the constant flow of rut, the fragrants of flowers was overpowered by its scent and the wind spread all over the sweet smell of crushed cardamon. Loud cries of elephants, like the roar of clouds, spread over the regions ; lions, suddenly awakened from sleep, looked about angrily and the peacocks and partridges suddenly became alert. Forest-trees, fine garments of the heavenly maidens hanging on their branches and the ground all around cleared for setting camps, appeared as well-tended as garden-trees.

Wandering and dalliance in the woods

Then the heavenly maidens desiring to wander about in the forest came out of their camps glowing with the rays of gems. Here and there brightening up the mountain trees for a moment with their own lustre they appeared like flashes of lightning. Since they walked they could take rest occasionally

and remove the fatigue of their heavy thighs and breasts, and their ornaments jingled sweetly. Thus their earthly journey was pleasanter than the aerial one. They came across so many trees, thickly covered with flowers within easy reach; still, they went on leaving them behind, for a connoisseur always hankers after the best. Attracted by the fragrance of cosmetics, bees hovered expectantly over their arms resembling creepers—palms being the leaves and lustre of the nails being the blossoms. The leaves of an Asoka tree trembled as the bees left it after enjoying the honey from the cluster of flowers. It appeared like a lady moving her hands in protest after her lips had been bitten hard. To a lady surrounded by bees her lover said, 'You are toiling in vain to drive away the bees. They are not at all afraid, for they had taken your delicate arms for the heavenly desire-yielding creepers'. Rivers looked like ladies, having the high *kasa* grass for their white silk garments, rows of cackling swans for their girdles and the banks for their hips and loins. As the river descended from a height drops of water, as cool as the beloved's lap, spread all over and shining brightly like white pearls they appeared to be the laughter of the forest. The creepers bent down as if to look, with great affection, at their dear friends with their eyes of flowers, charming with the collyrium of black unmoving bees. Rubbed by the temples of elephants reddish with rut the sandal trees assumed a greenish hue, and all these beautiful sights carried away the hearts of the maidens sent by Indra. Already the maidens had their hands full of pretty flowers; still they accepted more flowers from their lovers only to oblige them. While handing over a bunch of flowers to a lady, the lover uttered the name of her rival: so the prideful lady uttered not a single word; her eyes suffused with tears, she only scratched the ground with the toe. Another lady was listening too attentively to her lover, her face upraised, staring fixedly at him; the knot of her garment became loose and it slipped down; she absent-mindedly extended her hand for flowers, but only in vain, for the direction was wrong. One of the ladies playfully put on the chaplet of flowers interspersed with leaves, which was prepared by her lover. His passionate embrace firmly pressing the breasts was reciprocated by the pleasant dash of her firm thighs. Pollens got into a

lady's eyes. Her lover came closer and pretended to blow them out. But the lady aware of his deceit struck him on the chest with her large and rising breasts. The ladies plucked flowers and leaves as they wished and the splendour of the forest went on to them leaving the trees which were now bereft of glory. The tender palms of the ladies were tinged with red as they plucked the young blossoms ; covered with pollens, their large breasts appeared white ; the fragrance of flowers perfumed their bodies ; it appeared that they had gathered all their excellences from trees. With their heavy thighs resembling the elephant's trunk the ladies could hardly walk with ease even on the plain, and in the uneven path of the valley they faltered on every step like persons intoxicated. The lustre issuing from the gems sewn in the girdle enhanced most the natural beauty of the buttocks and thus the ladies excelled in beauty the newly formed sandy banks. Their navels bordering on the waist-line and as tender as the interior of a blooming lotus adorned the bellies which, pretty with wavy folds, bent due to the heaviness of the breasts. Their faces, covered all over with drops of sweat, with eyes not fully open due to fatigue, looked like lotuses bound by frost, with petals not yet fully bloomed.

Enjoying thus their various gestures and postures the Gandharvas looked at them as if they were going so for the first time.

The river—its clusters of lotus shaken by the fishes, its rows of waves extending over the mudless banks and the groups of swans cackling sweetly—as if heartily invited the ladies to take a dip in the water. The air, fragrant from the embrace of lotuses and cool from carrying water-particles out of the waves, blew gently and took off the discomfort of heat and as if extended a helping hand. The slow movement of the ladies resembled the gait of the swans, but the latter was without the coquettish dalliance ; their spacious buttocks resembled the sandy banks, but the latter were without heaviness ; their faces were as beautiful as lotuses, but the latter were without large eyes ; so there was hardly any basis for comparison. First the Gandharvas entered the water and the swarms of fishes became scattered : then followed the ladies with trepidation as if getting into water for the first time:

With great effort the ladies moved their heavy thighs and as soon as they entered the water waves rose and struck against the bank scattering the swans. The chests of the Gandharvas were as hard as rocks and the breasts of the ladies were large and high ; and their impact broke the flow. Full of indignation at this, the river sent waves striking against the bank and got itself polluted. The waves dishevelled the hair, misplaced the garlands and washed away the cosmetics ; thus constantly offending against the ladies they began to tremble as if in fear. The wounds inflicted by the lover's finger-nails which only hurt the rival ladies' eyes were concealed so long by the cosmetic ; but now it was washed away and the wounds shone as the invincible proof of the lover's intense attachment. 'Are these only lotus-petals with bees sitting upon them ? Are these only eyes with the pupils rolling ? Are these only the masses of hair of ones with the eyelashes down ? Are these only silent and unmoving rows of bees ? Are these only faces showing glittering rows of teeth through smiles ?'—debating thus the women knew after a long time that these were their friends hidden in groves of lotuses. Even before the eyes of the rival ladies the lover placed a garland—prepared by himself—on the breasts of his beloved ; spoiled by water as it was she did not abandon it, for it is only love that makes a thing cling and not the thing itself. Collyrium was no doubt applied to the eyes by the ladies to check the spread of reddishness from end to end ; yet it spread as the collyrium was washed off ; then also, the whiteness only was gone, the beauty lingered. So long the earrings of the ladies looked beautiful ; but as they were carried off—as if greedily—by the swift water they looked miserable like ministers suddenly relieved of powers. The decorations painted on the body were no more there ; the reddishness of the lips was washed away ; the collyrium applied to the eyes also disappeared. Yet the ladies looked as attractive as ever. So the Gandharvas came to the conclusion that in this case the body adorned the embellishments and not *vice versa*. The decorations made prior to entering the water—to please the lover—did not so much hurt the rival ladies ; but the beauty of the wounds made by finger-nails, soaked in water, burnt their eyes. Ladies struck the water with their hands and a deep sound arose like

one rising from a tabour ; dashing of the breasts beat time and the whole body trembled. So it appeared like a dance-show. The beautiful faces of ladies, as if laughing at the lotuses, were reflected in the clear water of the river, contributing to its further glory ; thus the river obtained its reward for offering the ladies an opportunity for frolicking in water. Fishes moving about in all directions struck against the ladies' thighs : their eyes rolled in fear and the creeper-like arms shook ; they were thus attractive even to their friends ; and what would be the plight of their lovers ! A prideful lady struck by a fish passionately embraced her lover feigning fear and he was greatly delighted : even a false gesture springing from true love causes delight. Hidden by their hair completely dishevelled by the plunge in water the ladies' faces looked like lotuses covered by swarms of bees. A lady, going beyond her depth, suddenly embraced her lover as if in fear, and though it happened before everybody's eyes it was not considered indecorous, for, apparently, there was a genuine ground. Another lady took a handful of water to throw it at her lover ; but with a smile he grasped her hand : immediately she was overpowered by love and the knot of the garment round her waist slipped : however, it was held in place by the girdle stiffened by the water. The eyes of the ladies had no collyrium, but the charming side-glances were there. The lips had lost their reddishness, but still they quivered charmingly. The decorative lines painted on the forehead had disappeared, but the dainty wrinkles were there. Thus, for the ladies, disfigurements became embellishments. The ladies were going down into the water near their lovers : their half-closed eyes were casting side-glances ; their bodies were trembling and the breasts were rising and falling with their breathing. Was all this a sign of fatigue or the advent of love ? A lady was overwhelmed with anger as her lover drenched her, for he had drenched her rival. Now, in spite of his earnest entreaties her anger did not lessen, for in the case of true affection acts of appeasement succeed only in furthering the indignation.

After sporting thus in the water the ladies started going up the banks leaving the water. But the water of the river as if intolerant of such fun and frolic proceeded in front through large waves. The ladies by their tumultuous water-

sport separated the pairs of Cakravakas and spoiled the beauty of the lotuses. Only the pearls in their bangles, washed by water, shone. Hence, they resembled lady-nights adorned with garlands of stars. The water of the river, full of waves, acquired a different colour as the juice of sandal mingled with it. The rays of the various gems torn from the ornaments presented it in strange hues. First enjoyed and then discarded the water appeared like a bed useful at night but useless in the morning.

Evening comes with all its glory

After the water-sport was over, the sun, finding that the ladies attired in colourful garments and ornaments were eager for union with their lovers, hung just over the sea, preparing to go down finally. Shining brightly, like the central gem, with its shooting rays, the sun left one side and went down on the other and the sky held the beauty of the day—disappearing fast—like a necklace of pearls. As if, the sun, full of thirst, had drunk too much lotus-honey with its hands of rays and fell down, intoxicated, on the ground with its crimson body. The sun turned red ; it could now be easily looked at. The distressing heat left the earth and went into the heart of the Cakravaka pair (which was now going to suffer separation). As half of the sun went down, the rays lost their dwelling ; wretched and insignificant, they somehow collected on the west, abandoning the east. They became as lustreless as a person who loses his glory by leaving his master whose fortune is declining, and taking shelter with someone very low. The coppery red rays of the sun, coming through the windows and hastening the evening toilet, were welcomed by the ladies like messengers from their lovers. Touching lightly the trees in the valley of Asta mountain with its rays, the sun went down—nobody could tell where—into the dense mountain forest, or the fathomless ocean, or the depth of the earth ? Echoing with the calling of birds returning to their nests, crimson hue of the dusk not yet spreading, the sun went out of sight and a paleness pervading the quarters, the evening looked like the morning. The western sky with rows of clouds extending over it assumed the beauty of the ocean tinged with red by the glow of rows of coral. As if due to fickleness

of character, dusk disappeared fast, disregarding the people, attached exclusively to her, with folded hands and head bent down in worship, like the friendship of a bad man paying no heed to the friendly.

So long darkness was hiding itself as if afraid of the light of dawn. But in the absence of the rays after the departure of dusk it acquired power and gradually rising from below pervaded all the quarters. As darkness enveloped all the things, no distinction of them, as large or small, could be made. So it appeared that the sun, while going down, had put away everything into its own fold. The Cakravaka and the Cakravaki became separated though they had no desire to do so ; but they had to, for who can alter the course of fate ? The two were very near and faced each other ; yet they could not be united ; they only called at each other. So in sympathy the lotus-creeper, devoid of joy, bent down its lotus-face. Nobody could ascertain what has actually happened. Have all the trees and hills been coloured dark ? Has the sky been brought down upon the earth ? Has the sky been totally covered by darkness ? Has the earth been made fully even, the holes and uneven places being filled up ? Have all the quarters lost themselves within darkness ? Beauty abandoned the lotuses as the approaching night made them lustreless ; instead it went to the sky bright with the shining stars, for everyone wants a secure abode.

The rays released by the moon, as white as the filament of *ketaka* flowers, spread all over the eastern quarters like a handful of powdered camphor—as if the moon, the lover, put cosmetics upon the face of his belowed lady, the east. As the moon approached it, the eastern quarter brightened, throwing away darkness like the pang of separation, its face shone white with the rays of smile. The rays of the moon as white as frost extended all over the sky having the colour of a blue lotus, as if, the flow of the Ganges was running into the water of the sea. Darkness pervading the sky like a mass of black cloud was thrown forward by the moon with its rays and appeared like a piece of elephant-skin hurled by Siva. Gradually the moon approached nearer, its rays straightened and reached upto the horizon : so the horizon free from the load of darkness could now breathe freely. With its digits

glowing like bright corals the moon threw away darkness, just like the primeval boar throwing up the earth with its tusk as ruddy as a gold spade. Brightening the sky with its cluster of rays, the moon, as ruddy as a lady's round breast tinged with saffron, slowly emerged out of the eastern ocean like a gold pitcher. Although the moon was up, darkness was not completely removed. So the night appeared like a new bride—her face unconcealed as the veil was pulled aside—bending down with shyness. The moon could not clear the sky as much as it should have done; darkness was not lifted from the hills and forests; the ends of quarters were not yet glowing; yet the night appeared to be adorned and beautiful. Ladies separated from their lovers in consequence of a quarrel looked angrily at the rising moon (for it compelled them to give up their pride and made them love-sick). So the moon, pleading guilty and afraid, went up very slowly. As the moon, the lover, embraced his beloveds, the stars, with the arms of rays, the ruddiness of the moon spreading all over appeared like cosmetic. The rays sent by the moon dislodged the darkness which was very dense, just as the ocean agitated by the Mandara mountain uprooted the forest of tall and densely grown trees. During the day, even in the scorching rays of the sun, the Cakravaki, was happy as she was then united with her lover. But at night even the cool rays of the moon failed to soothe her, for she was then separated. When the heart is aching everything is painful and unbearable. The nightly air spreading the pollens and fragrance of the blooming water-lilies gently stirred the trees where the birds were lost in happy slumber. As if like a friendly lady, the night sent the god of love on a victorious journey placing before him an auspicious silver pitcher, the moon, full of water, the rays, and adorned with a blue lotus, the multitude of black spots. One, though valorous, is not crowned with victory if one is friendless. So the god of love, though capable by himself, took up the bow only after having the moon-rays as his friends.

Lovers unite

The time for the sport of love was close at hand. So the ladies decorated the play-houses once more, though they were

already decorated. They engaged messengers, though they were already informed of the coming of their lovers. Once more they got busy with their toilet, though they had already completed it. So long as they were separated from their lovers the sandal-paste, garlands and the wine were not pleasant to them, for such things become enjoyable only in the company of lovers. The ladies became impatient and proceeded in haste to meet their lovers. Their cheeks showed wrinkles of ecstasy which spoiled the decorative lines painted there. Yet their faces surpassed the full moon in beauty. Just as the ladies were discussing with their companions the justifiability or otherwise of going to the lovers and entreating them they themselves arrived and overheard the conversation with great delight. Drops of sweat born of the ecstasy of first union concealed the horripilation ; ladies fell upon the lovers' chests wantonly and their toilet and attire were all spoiled ; but even this spoiled state showed them in rare charm. The effect of wine overpowered the ladies, who willingly and eagerly united with their lovers, setting aside all pride and shame. But it was not clear what made them yield, the god of love or the intoxication of wine ? The messenger said to a lady again and again, 'Your lover is just staring at the door in the hope that you would come ; his forehead is resting upon the palms : indeed, his very life is at your mercy ; so why quarrel with him ? But every time the lady behaved as if she was hearing the words for the first time. The bashfulness which made the ladies cast only sidelong glances and prevented the most desirable act of falling down upon the lovers' chests melted away at the time of union. Feigning that he had committed an offence, had been dishonoured and was sorry, the lover started to leave. But the beautiful one's flow of tears prevented him like a solicitous friend. A lady, full of tears, turned her face away from the unfaithful lover, yet the bristling hair of the body indicated her attachment towards the lover. As the lover kissed forcibly on the lips of his beloved, her garment (its knot being loosened) slipped away, along with the modesty and shame. The knot at the waist loosened, but the garment was held by the girdle. As the lover pulled it away she became overwhelmed with shame and so closely embraced him that her large breasts, pressed against his chest, became round.

The pleasure of close embrace was heightened by the infliction of nail-wounds and that of kisses by the hard bitings of teeth. Although love is well known for tenderness, at the moment of union, it is really opposite, cruel and hurting. The words of the ladies inarticulate due to ecstasy, the shaking of their tender hands and their sudden cries of pleasure and thrill—all appeared to be the weapons of the god of love urging the lovers on and on.

Again and again the youths sipped wine, but their thirst increased more and more ; so they engaged themselves in drinking the smiling lips of their beloveds as well as wine lotus-petals soaking in it. As the lady became united with her lover, her anger melted away. As they drank the pleasant wine, their quarrel ceased. Peace and calm prevailed upon them. So the god of love refrained from putting any arrow on his bow for them. By drinking wine—all the more palatable as it was offered by the lover's hands—the ladies lost their shame and indolence. But what did they gain, dexterity or an uncommon experience ? First she herself tasted the drink. Next she offered it to her lover. Then both drank from the same cup and the drink acquired newer and newer tastes every moment. As if to simulate the ladies' charming eyes with playing eyebrows, the lotuses borrowed, with their moving, tender petals, the tremulousness from the waves of the liquid in the drinking cups. A thing naturally excellent acquires further excellence when it comes from a special source. So the wine offered from the mouth of the lover appeared all the more palatable. The drinking of wine washed away the cosmetic of red lac from their lips, yet it was pleasant to the ladies, for in the bright and clear crystal cups every time they saw reflected their lips torn by the lover's teeth. The wine produced reddishness in the ladies' eyes, but took away that of their lips. It imparted its own fragrance to the mouth of the ladies, but itself also imbibed that of their mouth. Thus it was not clear whether the wine made an exchange knowingly or simply mixed up everything unknowingly. The ear-rings of blue lotuses belonging to the ladies had the apprehension of becoming useless, for the purpose was served by the blue eyes extending upto the ears ; so the wine, acting like a friend, changed the colour of the eyes. The beauty and glow of wine

though spreading through the whole body, showed all the more in their faces with eyes becoming more and more charming and foreheads as ruddy as corals. Loosening of the garment at the navel, complete abandonment of shame and sudden show of anger without any reason—all these faults wine turned into qualities and the ladies were absolved from offence. Driven by the intoxication of the wine the ladies fell down upon the chests of their lovers even before the eyes of the friends; so the shame which was then futile could neither stay in nor move out of their hearts. As they got drunk, they could hardly open their eyes fully. Their speeches too were cut short. They could hardly move their arms at the moment of embrace. Thus as if the state of intoxication replaced their bashfulness. It was not clear whether the wine created a new sweetness in the act of love-making or just increased the sweetness which had already been there; in any case, the god of love found newer and newer chances of entering into their hearts. Anxious that their lovers, unfaithful by nature, would go away leaving them, if they became drunk and lost their consciousness, the ladies did not take too much wine. Indeed it is the very nature of love to become apprehensive even when there is no real ground. The loneliness soothing the senses, the intoxication of wine benumbing the mind, the glorious moonlight and the very close proximity of the beloved—all these carried away love to a great height, as yet unknown and unexplored. In the act of love-making all limits were crossed by audaciousness; mass of hair and garlands of flowers were cruelly handled; thus even the god of love acted like a man wild with intoxication. The wine made the ladies incapable of resistance and they helplessly submitted to their lovers and bent upon enjoyment as they were they could hardly act properly; yet everything became more and more pleasant.

Thus the Gandharvas and the heavenly maidens, attached to each other, followed the instruction of the god of love, when the end of night was announced by the songs of birds. As if the night had come to an end very quickly; the youths sleeping off the fatigue of love-making were roused by the birds' songs and aware that separation was imminent they plunged once again into the act of love-making with newer and greater zeal. As the night ended, a breeze—spreading

all over the fragrance of garlands, wine and cosmetics—blew soothing the ladies and taking away the fatigue. The blossom-like lips of the ladies fragrant from the smell of wine trembled ; their partly opened eyes were ruddy with sleep : the decorative lines painted on the face had disappeared ; so only the lingering effects of the wine somehow held the beauty of their faces. As the day came and separation followed the only consolation, calling up the memory of a night of enjoyment, was the wounds and marks inflicted at the time of love-making.

Maidens come face to face with Arjuna

Then, in the morning, glowing with the beauty of union, the ladies left their camps, exhibiting coquettish greatures, with a view to enticing Arjuna away from his penance. On the ground also they wanted to proceed as speedily as on the aerial path, but could not, because of the heaviness of their breasts and thighs. The lac dye on the feet of ladies marked out their path and the green grass underneath turned red. As if the path was strewn with innumerable Indragopa insects. The ringing of anklets mingled with the jingle of girdles and echoed through the caves and spread over the woods greatly exciting the swans and cranes. As they found that even the beasts of prey lived happily with the non-ferocious ones, satisfied with easily obtainable fruits and flowers, they knew that Arjuna must be practising penance in the vicinity, and fear gripped their hearts. As they entered the wood dominated by the presence of Arjuna practising penance, they were rendered powerless, for nothing is impossible for one who has acquired extraordinary powers by penance.

They saw Arjuna, his limbs emaciated through austerities, yet firm and he had weapons in his hands. Thus, in the one hand, he held the glory of serenity and on the other, the majesty of royal power. Like the moon he was surrounded by his own effulgence, flooding the sky and pleasing to the eyes. He was seated on one of the summits, yet appeared to pervade all of them. With the mass of long matted hair, practising severe penance on the Ganges' bank he appeared like the sacrificial fire beside the altar with flames roaring up desiring oblations. Though emaciated he was as hard as rock ;

though immersed in tranquility he was invincible by nature; though staying alone he appeared to be surrounded by many; though a pauper like a sage he was as rich as Indra in spirit and valour. Looking at his massive form, capable of protecting the three worlds and surpassing all in vitality and strength, the maidens considered Arjuna's penance for victory useless, for he seemed to have nothing left to be achieved. So long they had enticed without difficulty people of inferior calibre. But now they had a formidable opponent. They felt very proud on being engaged in this challenging mission. The ladies had come to allure Arjuna, but they themselves were captivated by his youth as soon as they set their eyes on him. Thus what happened was just the opposite of what was intended.

Advent of the seasons

Then, suddenly, on the instruction of the maidens, the Gandharvas started to play on lyres and tabours, and the six seasons at once appeared in that wood.

The sky was overcast with clouds heavy with water. Streaks of lightning, like creepers, spread their splendour. From one corner to the other, the sky resounded with the deep roar of the dark clouds. Then came the rains which at once awakened buds in the Malati creepers around Arjuna's hermitage and washed away the dust from the earth. Arjuna flowers bloomed in all directions and the air became perfumed; the whole animal world lost patience and became excited with a new feeling. Tasting the well-ripened rose apples the cuckoos were delighted beyond limit and cried out in sweeter and sweeter tones. It carried away the hearts not only of the happy ones but also of the sorrowful. The air became perfumed as it carried the fragrance of Kadamba flowers. The quarters echoed with the sweet calls of the peacocks. All this overwhelmed the hearts of people in general, but not that of Arjuna, for it is not easy to spoil the concentration of a great man. The autumn came as the new bride of the rains: she had bangles of lotus-stalk and her garment was the extending bunches of water-lilies; on her hand she held the arrow of Bāna reed. The sweet calls of peacocks mingled with the charming cackling of swans and became sweeter and sweeter,

The groves of water-lilies were flooded with showers of Kadamba flowers and their beauty increased further and further. The union of the excellents naturally leads to a greater excellence. The bees, themselves strewn with pollens of Kadamba flowers, left the dusty Ketakas. In search of honey they pervaded the Asana flower, which so long dark blue in the stalks only now turned so wholly. On the watery sprouting grass, the fat Indragopa insects left the Bandhujiva flowers and went away to the blossoming Palasas and themselves shone like them.

The season of Hemanta, though appearing untimely, was not deficient in excellence—heaps of Priyangus were there, the air was perfumed with the fragrance of Kundas and the frost was not yet so frequent. The Lavali creepers were in full bloom, the air moved everywhere carrying the fragrance of Lodhras and all around there was joy and excitement. Yet, Arjuna was calm and unruffled, for the mind of one striving for victory does not move away from the right path.

Then came winter, the only friend of the god of love, proclaiming that it was time to bid farewell to Hemanta and spring was not far behind. Its wealth consisted of some blossoming mango-trees, a thin veil of mist and a few Sindhuvara flowers awakening from sleep. As if to go up the flowering trees the spring took hold of a staff, a branch of the blossoming mango-tree and slowly put her feet in the lotus groves, where the rows of singing bees appeared like her anklets. The Kuravaka brides smiled, the blooming flowers being their tender lips, and enjoying their beauty the god of love sat upon the blossoms of the Asokas. Again and again the southerly breeze scattered the bees ; so they formed a dense cluster. As they hovered around a lotus, simulating a charming face, they looked like the hair dishevelled. Like a jealous lover the bee kissed his beloved, the Sala creeper, on the lips, the trembling petals and the mouth fragrant with wine, the flower rich with honey, while it swayed in the breeze as if shaking her limbs in fake anger.

But all this even failed to distract Arjuna's mind.

As summer came, all around bloomed white Mallika flowers ; as if summer laughed at spring that it too had been defeated by Arjuna. An army, though formidable, cannot

win, if there is internal dissension. So the seasons, because of mutual conflict, could not unite and lead Arjuna astray even for a moment. The melody of the lutes played upon by the Gandharvas and the seasons with all their individual charms failed to act upon Arjuna, but they enabled the god of love to carry away the hearts of the maidens. So their eyes found no solace in the blooming petals of lotuses or the clusters of Yuthikas and Mallikas as much as they found in the various limbs of Arjuna. The ladies came to conquer, but were themselves conquered. The ladies danced, but their eyes did not correctly show the proper sentiments : nor were they fixed upon their tender palms according to the rules of dance ; they faltered on every step.

Love sickness at the sight of Arjuna

But as soon as their eyes fell upon Arjuna, they never moved. Taking their lac-coloured feet for scarlet lotuses groups of bees eagerly fell upon them. Kadamba flowers strewn here and there were trampled under feet. From their idly moving feet the red lac-juice oozed out continuously. As if their love, unbearably anxious, was coming out assuming a physical form. Because of bashfulness a lady, as she faced Arjuna, tried to hide herself behind her companions in front and thus gave away herself completely. Indeed, love is disclosed by the very effort at concealment. A sudden gust of wind shook away the garment from the thighs—the lady became embarassed and her opponents were struck with wonder. But it failed to create the least impression upon Arjuna.

One of the ladies sent a messenger to Arjuna, and she said :

"Tormented by the god of love my friend has sent me to you, saying 'bring the beloved sage to me'. In fact, she is not in possession of her heart and does not know that it is already given away to you. Deliberating long she composed a message for you. But overpowered by emotion and sorrow she could hardly speak. Discarding the bed of flowers, soft and fragrant, she lay on the ground strewn with leaves. But the ground even does not feel pleasant enough to her. So she only wants to put herself in your cool, enjoyable lap. O Sinless one ! let the desire of the emaciated one be fulfilled. Other-

wise she is going to die. It is easy to practice penance but it is not easy to find a lady with true attachment and love. Therefore, do not be so cruel ; please be sympathetic to her : the heart of a true sage is tender with mercy. Only a wretched man ignores the fortune that arrives out of its own accord."

Another lady came forward, shaking her buttocks amorously and controlling the flowing hair with one of the hands, and hurled upon Arjuna the most powerful and victorious weapon of the god of love, a charming side-glance. Making alluring gestures, another lady came forward, slim but bending with the load of her breasts as large as an elephant's humps. But in front of Arjuna she straightened up holding a branch of a blossoming tree ; as if the bow of Cupid was drawn and released. Another lady held with her hand her blue garment which was moving down as the knot at the navel had slipped, and wished to go away as quickly as possible ; but she was prevented by the slipping cord of the girdle. Her lips quivering in jealousy, a lady scolded Arjuna, "If you have achieved tranquility of mind, why are you carrying a bow ? O Knave ! you are striving after pleasures and not salvation. There must be some other lady reigning in your heart and that is why there is no room there for ourselves". But afterwards she cast a crooked glance at Arjuna and then, abandoning all shame she struck on his chest with the lotus adorning her ear.

The ladies entreated piteously. They abandoned all shame and decorum. They even shed tears. They could do nothing else, for they had reached the limit. Even in failure the ladies appeared glorious by their side-glances, bashfulness, slow movements, paleness and dejection. Cupid can make ladies charming in any circumstances. The naturally dallying movement of their feet surpassing even the steps of swans, eyes rolling from the labour of moving the heavy thighs, speech inarticulate from infatuation as they were smitten by Cupid's arrows, eyes extended from fear and wonder, repeated amorous glances with dancing eyebrows—all these generally made the advance of heavenly maidens irresistible. But they failed to create any impact upon Arjuna, lost in deep meditation.

So, the ladies, weary and cast down by failure, went back to heaven along with the Gandharvas.

Indra himself appears in disguise

After the departure of the ladies from heaven, there arrived at the hermitage of Arjuna, the lord of the gods, Indra, in disguise, very much pleased with Arjuna's self-restraint. As Arjuna looked on he found that an old man sage-like in appearance and weary with a long journey was approaching him. His matted locks were shining grey all around. So he appeared like dusk tinged by the sun's scarlet rays mingled at the same time with the moon's rays. The wrinkled ends of his eyes were covered with grey eyebrows and he appeared like a lake where the lotus-petals had been rendered lustreless by the fall of frost. He appeared incapable of carrying even his emaciated limbs and like a glutton surviving on the mercy of an obliging wife he leaned heavily on the walking staff. Although he was in disguise, his glow, capable of flooding the whole world, came out a little like that of the sun covered by small pieces of cloud. His body was old and worn out, yet the physical form was uncommon and extraordinary. Subdueing the beauty of the hermitage by his presence he permeated it with fear. Yet Arjuna's heart overflowed with affection for him. A true friend even though unknown draws one perforce.

Indra deprecates Arjuna

Then, duly honoured and welcomed by Arjuna, Indra said :

"You have engaged yourself in penance at this young age. This is indeed praiseworthy. Even old people like ourselves are often led astray by the objects of pleasure. Your commendable physical form had acquired further excellence by this engagement in penance. This is really a matter of great happiness. For physical beauty is not rare but the acquisition of qualities is so. The glory of youth is as short-lived as the shadow cast by autumnal cloud. The objects of enjoyment are pleasant in the beginning but in the long run they cause suffering only. Every living being is afflicted with torments constantly from the very moment he is born. So a

wise person strives for salvation only to get away forever from the sufferings of worldly existence. You must be pure in heart for good sense has dawned upon you. But only your incompatible attire is creating a doubt in my mind. You are practising penance. But instead of putting on deer-skin or bark you have on an armour like a person marching for battle. As you are striving after salvation and have no attachment to the body it can be concluded that you are not carrying weapons for personal safety. Nor have you any intention of causing injury to any living being. But, then, do these two large quivers, the dreadful bow and the terrible sword like the long arm of death speak of your effort at acquiring tranquility of mind? Rather they show that surely you must be desirous of victory over the enemies. Indeed, one turning an action conducive to salvation into a means for violence would be guilty of making pure water undrinkable by making it turbid. Lust for wealth and pleasure is the root of all vices. In your heart there should be no room for it. It is an irresistible force countering the dawning of right knowledge. Just as all rivers run into the sea so also all dangers converge upon the person who acquires impermanent wealth by tormenting the living beings. Wealth can be acquired only by very difficult means and hard labour. Guarding the acquired wealth again is all the more difficult and a wealthy man has to live in constant fear. Wealth is thus a source of suffering only—a curse in disguise. The goddess of fortune cares for neither the high nor the low. No one can ever be dear to her. But strangely enough people are always foolishly running after her. That fortune should leave the wicked is justified. But is it commendable that she should desert even the good and honest people? Nor should you try to torment the enemy. As it is in your own case, separation from the dear and near ones is painful to one and all. Union with the dear ones turns void into fullness, danger into a festival and disappointment into a source of gain. But when one is separated from them pleasant becomes unpleasant, life though dear becomes unbearable, and one feels all alone even though surrounded by people. All this you can easily feel yourself. So you should not put others into sufferings which you yourself want to avoid. Life is short; like the grace of fortune it lasts only a short

while. Therefore, do not swerve from the right path. The righteous never does. O Ascetic ! Abandon this lust for war. Do not vitiate this sacred penance by employing it for evil purposes. If you are really bent upon victory why don't you try to destroy the cycle of births or to overpower the invincible sense-organs within your own body ? In that case the whole world will come down to your feet out of its own accord. The enjoyment of today becomes a matter of recollection tomorrow. It is as illusory as a dream. Why should you be overpowered by it ? Objects of enjoyment produce pleasure for the time being only, but in the end they cause endless pain. They would easily abandon you, but you would not be able to abandon them with the utmost effort. They are nothing but the most vicious ones of the enemies. In this lonely spot, washed time and again by the waves of the heavenly river, you are sure to achieve salvation in no time. So please give up your weapons."

Arjuna replies

As Indra stopped, Arjuna began to speak with due modesty :

"Sir, you have spoken superbly. Your words are pleasing, meaningful and logical. They are free from defects and uncontradicted by the scriptures. In fact, few persons would be capable of such a speech. However, I must humbly point out that you are not aware of the situation I am placed in, which has compelled me to take up this course of action, and that is why you are advising me to strive for liberation. Just as the day cannot hold the beauty of the sky shining with glorious stars so also I cannot truly receive your advice, though very beneficial.

I am the son of Pandu and Kunti. I am a *kshatriya* by caste. I am here by the order of my elder brother, Yudhisthira, unjustly banished from the kingdom by his kinsmen. Following the command of the sage Vyasa, I have taken up this severe act of austerity for propitiating Indra. Engaging himself in the fraudulent play of dice Yudhisthira put up as stake himself, his kingdom, his brothers and even his wife and he lost everything. Who can indeed alter the

course of fate ! Along with his brothers and wife he is now suffering enough.

The enemy made us lick the dust—they forcibly took away our upper garments and hurled harsh and taunting words at us in public. They even dragged Draupadi most disgracefully in the presence of the elders. Perhaps then and there Death made a mental promise to bring them soon to his own kingdom. Draupadi too covered her eyes with tears as if because of the futility of looking at husbands who failed to act as true husbands. We could do nothing as Yudhisthira remained calm in spite of such heinous insults, for though the enemy can be extirpated in due course there is no remedy for public censure (that would arise from breach of promise). The water of the sea and the heart of the noble are both afraid of crossing the limit. Even though agitated they remain controlled and pure. The cause of all our misfortune was our friendly attitude towards the sons of Dhritarashtra. Like taking shelter under the shade of a falling bank, keeping company with the bad is only productive of evil. The ways of a knave who is not afraid of public slander and makes no discrimination between good and bad are as inscrutable as those of fate. My heart would have gone to pieces immediately but for the powerful wrath which held it together. The enemy has thus forced us to lead the life of beasts in the forest. We are ashamed of one another even among ourselves and it is little wonder that we can hardly face our friends and relations. A man without power and spirit is as despicable as a blade of grass under the feet. Finding in the case of the mountain that whatever is lofty is insurmountable great men aspire after more and more loftiness. A man is adored by fortune, his fame remains firm and he is considered a true man—only so long as he does not part with honour and dignity. That person is only truly born in whose presence the counting does not proceed beyond one. One may try to assault even a great mountain covered with dense forests, but never a man with spirit and dignity. A man who, by the white glow of his fame, puts into shame even the orb of the moon ennobles also the entire lineage and it is because of such persons that the earth is justifiably called an abode of jewels (vasundhara).

I do not want happiness, nor wealth, nor salvation. Only I want to wash away the dirt of infamy the enemy has thrown upon us by the ever-flowing tears of their wives tormented by widowhood. It may be that the noble will despise me. It may be that my sense of judgement is faltering. It may put you into shame as you are wasting your efforts on a wrong person. But so long as I do not win back our lost glory by annihilating the enemy I do not consider even salvation a desired end, for then I shall be as good as unborn, dead, or a blade of grass. A man is not a true man if his anger is pacified without a victory over the enemy. The application of the term 'man' in the sense of just a man is useless. But when the term is applied by the noble and the learned because of the excellence of qualities it is indeed a true and just application. A person whose name mentioned with respect in an assembly carries off the honour from all other people—and even the enemies cannot but acknowledge the same—is a man in the true sense of the term. Like a person, extremely thirsty, craving for a sip of water, Yudhisthira is waiting for me—for the moment when I shall be able to exterminate the enemy. A man failing his master in the hour of need is a black sheep of the family like the dark spot on a white moon.

Authorities like Manu and others prescribe the gradual following of the stages of life. Salvation represents the fourth and final stage. How can I strive for it without first going through the earlier stage of the house-holder ? I have not yet succeeded in my mission ; the enemy has not yet been annihilated ; my dear and near ones are still suffering. I can therefore hardly act of my own free will for their sake. I cannot strive for salvation even though I am personally willing. A man of honour and dignity never shirks his duty and responsibility. Here, on this summit, I shall either go into pieces like a patch of cloud scattered by a strong wind or, by propitiating Indra, draw out for ever the painful dart of infamy."

Arjuna continues penance with Indra's blessings

As Arjuna stopped, Indra revealed his true form, embraced him and advised him to worship Siva for achieving his purpose. "If Siva is propitiated", he said, "I shall endow you with such

power and strength that you will be peerless and invincible in the three worlds and fortune would be only too eager to rush to you leaving the enemy".

Following the advice of Indra, Arjuna, with a pleasing countenance, devoted himself tirelessly in penance for propitiating Siva. To purify both his inside and outside, he fasted and stood on one foot gazing at the blazing sun for many days. His body and the senses suffered immensely, but he became as firm as the Himalaya. Uncommon perseverance is one of the great assets of the noble. Close by there were fruits, ripe and delicious, and there was water, cool and clear. But they failed to allure Arjuna, for to a man of noble deeds the practice of austerities is like ambrosia. He was not astonished that he had practised the severest of austerities. Nor was he sad that the fruit was late in coming. He did not show slackness even for a moment, and the elements of *tamas* and *rajas* disappeared fast without overpowering the element of *sattva*. His body was lean, yet it surpassed the glory of the three worlds. Even to those who had acquired the highest knowledge it appeared frightful. What indeed is there that is not easily achieved by the spirited ! Arjuna shone in glory even greater than the fire raging in the night and surpassing the sea in patience appeared loftier than the mountain. As he constantly muttered spells in silence his face was encircled by the rays emitted by the teeth and it appeared like the fiery orb of the sun. He had on an armour and in place of the sacred thread there was a bow with the string attached. He appeared like the great Himalaya covered by dreadful forests surrounded by rainbows. As he proceeded for the ritual bathing, as if the Himalaya was pushed under the ground by his heavy tread, for heaviness is caused by excellence of qualities and not by mere outward bulk. Then above the head of Arjuna, there appeared an unconquerable, glorious light, which filled up the intermediate space between the heaven and the earth and impeded the path of gods and seers. Even during the dark fortnight darkness was driven away by the prince's glow so that the bright light never left the sky. As if the orb of the sun was overpowered by the mass of rays coming out of Arjuna's body and feeling ashamed it did not stay up in the sky. A ruddy hue went up from Arjuna's matted hair

and he waited with the bow, the string attached in place. So the Siddhas looked upon him as Rudra about to destroy the cities of demons, only without the third eye on the temple. Who is this person engaged in the severest of penances—the lord of the gods or the blazing sun or just fire with soaring flames? The sages debated like this, for they could in no way think of him as any ordinary living being. Although spreading far and wide his glow did not burn down the woods or dry up the waters, yet for everyone there it became unbearable.

Sages approach Siva

So at last the hermits and sages, helpless and tormented, sought the protection of Siva. Siva was engulfed in a mass of rays which surpassed in brilliance even the sun, and the sages with their eyes dazed could hardly see him. Then, gradually, as they sang in his praise, they found, within the mass of glow, a beautiful and pleasing form. The god was resting his hand on the large and lofty hump of his bull, enjoying the touch. He stood only on one of the summits, but his brilliance pervaded the whole earth, the blue ocean and the path of the clouds. The middle of his knees was encircled by an enormous snake. So, as if, he represented the entire earth surrounded by the Lokaloka mountain, the farthest limit for the sun's rays. Emitting rays his huge blue neck tinged the Sesa serpent across his chest appearing like the sacred thread. The moon's rays playing over his head pervaded his locks and flooded the forehead as white as *jati* flowers: they appeared like the water of the Ganges left over.

Then, by making sign with the eye, Siva gave them permission to speak and they began to relate their sufferings due to Arjuna's severe penance. They said:

"O the unique and peerless one! A man with a body as terrible as that of the demon Vrtra, subduing even the sun by his glow, is practising penance on the Indrakila. His possessions—two large quivers, a bow, a sword, matted hair, bark garment and deer skin—are self-contradictory agreeing with the attire of neither a warrior nor a hermit. Yet, strangely enough, in his case at least, they do not appear incongruous. When he moves, the earth appears to be moving: when he

becalms, his senses everything—wind, planets and stars—stays unmoved; a stillness permeates the whole atmosphere. Undoubtedly, very soon he will overpower this world by his vigour—the whole world along with the gods and demons, making everything insignificant and lustreless. We do not know for certain what he is after. Is he trying to conquer or destroy all the worlds at the same time? Or, is he striving for final emancipation? Nevertheless, we are unable to bear his vigour. O lord! what makes you remain indifferent to him? Nothing indeed can be unknown to you. Is it not your duty to free us from fear? Let us not be overpowered, you being our protector'.

Siva explains the situation

So saying the sages fell silent and resounding the quarters with his deep voice, Siva said:

"This man is none else than the human portion of the great god Visnu, the lord of creation and destruction of the world. He is worshipping me only for the extermination of his enemies, who are tormenting the whole world. But a demon called Muka, thinking that he is a friend of the gods, is proceeding towards him with a view to kill him. Knowing well that he will not be able to kill Arjuna in his own form even though Arjuna is all alone here, this sinful demon has disguised himself as a ferocious boar and is proceeding undauntedly. I shall disguise myself as a Kirata and slay the disguised demon, the boar, into which Arjuna also will put an arrow, and a quarrel will follow as to who is the real killer. Arjuna is no doubt weary and emaciated with long penance. He is all alone and there is nothing else to help him. Yet, because of wrath, he will exhibit uncommon strength and power. Let all of you see it with your own eyes".

Siva marches on as lord of Kiratas

With these words to the sages, Siva transformed himself into a Kirata chief. He took up a long bow emitting sound like the roar of a dark cloud and put an arrow in it. Out of their love for Siva, the Ganapatis also disguised themselves as Kiratas and taking up spears, axes, arrows and bows consti-

tuted a large army. Following the command of Siva they divided the place among themselves, and filling the place with terrible bustle and din, proceeded from every quarter with the apparent motive of hunting. The forest and the caves were all filled with the piteous cries of beasts and birds who were scared and driven out of their dwellings ; it appeared as if the whole mountain had cried out in terror. While fleeing, the beasts, though natural enemies, did not harm one another. Even natural enmity is driven away by a great calamity. To the Yaks their bushy tails were very dear. So when these got entangled in a grove of canes they had to remain fixed in spite of dreading a shower of arrows from Siva's army. Although there was cause for alarm, the lions looked undauntedly at the army of Siva. Their manes were fragrant with the rut of tuskers they had slain and being roused from sleep they yawned little fishes. Its muddy banks were difficult to walk on. The water became ruddy by the juice of sandal trees as branches were broken by the fleeing elephants. As trees like Aguru, Tamala and Usira were crushed under feet by buffaloes, the breeze became fragrant. It scattered around the parrot-coloured Sila flowers and took away the fatigue of the people moving about in the forest.

Agitating thus the whole valley and the woods, Siva arrived at Arjuna's hermitage. Presently he saw the demon dark as a mass of cloud, proceeding slowly towards Arjuna, digging the earth, with its tusks. He left behind the major part of his army. Accompanied by only a few chiefs, concealing themselves behind trees and bushes, he followed the footprints of the boar.

Arjuna's reaction on finding the demon in disguise

Meanwhile, Arjuna cast his glance at the approaching boar. With its ferocious face with two massive tusks and the enormous body it appeared capable of even splitting up the earth. It bore down upon him from a distance, unerring and intent upon its purpose, and the hair on its neck were raised straight upward due to anger. Though desirous of victory, Arjuna was torn by doubts. He thought :

"This lone boar, uprooting the massive trees with its hard tusks and breaking asunder the valley with its firm shoulders,

is rushing towards me as if challenging me to a duel. In this hermitage, due to the effect of penance, animals are free from the desire to harm. But this boar is rushing with the definite purpose of hurting me. Does it indicate the ineffectiveness of my penance ? Or is it but the magic of some demon ? Or it may be that in some previous birth it had enmity with me, which like a grateful friend has not yet parted with it. Otherwise, instead of attacking its normal prey why should it rush towards me only ? It must not be any ordinary beast, it must be somebody else bent upon killing me, for my mind is getting ill-disposed towards it. Indeed, a friend or a foe is easily recognised by the mental reaction, agreeable or disagreeable. It would not be proper to remain idle with the impression that since I am a hermit who has committed no offence I have nothing to fear, for a wicked person jealous of others' prosperity would stop at nothing. This dark boar, like a solid mass of cloud, is shaking the whole mountain by its onslaught. No wild beast can have such power and strength. It must be some demon in disguise. I am no doubt calm and passionless, but this boar has turned, by magic, the place into a hunting forest and created an army raising great din and the fear-stricken beasts are fleeing in every direction. Or, it may be somebody else who has received honour and benefits from Duryodhana and in order to pay him back has resolved to kill me assuming the form of a boar. Or, is it Asvasena coming in for revenge as all his kith and kin has been burnt to death at the Khandava fire ? Or, is it someone who has been angered by Bhima's torments ? Anyway, it does not matter whether it is a real or a magic boar. Proud of its strength it is going to kill me. So I must kill it. The uprooting of an enemy is said to be highly desirable. Practise penance, without being overcome by any obstacle—thus I have been instructed by Vyasa. As such, I cannot keep my vow but by killing this ferocious animal."

Arjuna and Siva both strike the boar

Deliberating thus Arjuna took up the bow and arrow. As the arrow was put into the bow, the twang of the bow made the caves burst forth, and the mountain shaken by his bold steps became as if doubtful of its very existence. And in

wonder Siva looked at Arjuna, firm and unwavering, the bow and arrow fully drawn, as if his own self in the terrible form bent upon the destruction of Tripura. Then Siva also pulled the string of his bow setting an arrow to it and by the stamping of his feet the great mountain as if sank into the ground. As both of them were about to strike the enemy the boar flung itself between them as if to destroy itself wilfully. The arrow came out with great speed and force. It illuminated the sky like a fiery streak of lightning out of a dark mass of cloud and its roar struck terror even into the hearts of the mighty elephants. A loud sound was produced by the wings of the fast-moving arrow and the great serpants were petrified with fear apprehending the advent of Garuda. The rays of the flying arrow—as if coming out of Siva's angry red eyes themselves—with a hue as tawny as a streak of lightning drew out a bright path in the sky. The dark body of the boar was as hard as a dense mass of ice, yet the arrow went through it unimpeded and everybody looked on petrified; like a shark swiftly passing into the water the arrow finally entered into the earth. At the same time, tormenting the whole animal world, the arrow of Arjuna rose into the sky like the raised forefinger of the enraged god of death—an arrow beautiful in shape and with an iron head as sharp as a finger-nail. Like a shining meteor spreading glow all over the forest the arrow fell down on the earth with a sound like the simultaneous crying of a thousand birds. The arrow had such a great speed that nobody could mark its release from the bow and entry into the prey. So it appeared that it has struck without even reaching the object. Like effort easily achieving what is ordained by fate the arrow too overpowered without difficulty the animal already pierced by Siva's arrow. Like lack of judgement and useless enterprises destroying wealth, like diminished wealth and lack of charity destroying the allegiance of the subordinates and like corruption and lack of vigilance destroying the victorious, the two darts, one from Siva and one from Arjuna, completely overcame the mighty boar. Then, about to enter into eternal darkness, the boar suddenly lost its speed and began whirling round and round; it thought that the orb of the sun had come down on earth and the trees were all moving in circles. Down on the ground the boar was soaked in warm blood. By the

strokes of its hoofs and tusks rocks were broken into pieces. For a moment it glanced at Arjuna and life-breath went out as it roared in anguish and anger.

Arjuna is prevented from retrieving his dart

Although Arjuna had no dearth of darts he wanted to get back the one which had so brilliantly succeeded in its mission. For between one who has already proved one's worth and one who is yet to do so the former is obviously dearer. As he was about to pull out the dart, suddenly he saw a Kirata, with a bow in hand, waiting to communicate his master's message. Saluting modestly he said to Arjuna :

"Your gentle gestures show that you are not haughty. Your penance reveals that you have acquired the highest wisdom. Your god-like physical form indicates your very noble lineage. Although an ascetic without worldy possessions you have won all the kings by your spiritual attainments. You are as if ruling over this mountain as gloriously as Indra. Although alone, your majesty makes you appear surrounded by a host of retinues. It is no wonder that victory is ever running after you. You have conquered both *rajas* and *tamas* and nothing, even liberation, is unattainable for you. Your splendour puts even the sun into shame and your valour and heroism are known to all. So may I request you not to take away forcibly this dart of my master which has ended the life of the boar ? A man of good conduct is adored and honoured by the noble and why should people like yourselves swerve from the right path ? You are an ascetic and a noble man. You should not only desist from carrying away another's properity but also feel ashamed for killing this animal which has already been struck by another. In fact, it is better not to think of the kind of harm the boar would have done to you had it not been struck down without delay by our master. Let no such calamity ever come upon you. The rushing boar was becoming as invincible as the thunderbolt and who except our master would have been able to stop it for ever with just one dart ? In an hour of calamity our master has saved your life and become your true friend. Do not be ungrateful by creating enmity with him. Wealth is difficult to earn ; protection of the earned is more painful and ultimately, it causes

nothing but suffering. Friendship however is easy to obtain—can be obtained by a single good gesture; it saves one from dangers and is beneficient in the end. Please do not despise it. Wealth is transient, the earth even may be snatched away by powerful enemies. But friendship is as firm as a rock. Do not dishonour the friendship which has come to you of its own accord.

As you are carrying arms it is certain that you are practising penance for some worldly gain. If you extend the hand of friendliness to our master you will get whatever you desire. He has no dearth of excellent horses and elephants. He possesses immense wealth. There is no reason for his being agitated over the possession of a simple dart. However, he can never put up with dishonour. If anybody tries to take away anything by force from him, even if it be a speck of dust, he loses patience and becomes enraged. But if one becomes a suppliant to him, he would glady give away not only his wealth and possessions but his life even. You should therefore give back the dart. Let this friendship between you two, like that between Rama and Sugriva, effected by the turn of fate, last for ever.

Not that we are falsely accusing you. What for should we try to acquire a dart belonging to an ascetic? We are in fact in possession of so many precious darts, which are coveted even by Indra, the king of the gods. If you really desire to have a dart, why not ask our master for one? If a person like you becomes a suppliant to him he would not hesitate to lay the conquered earth even at your feet. He would never fail you, for he knows the pain and shame one suffers when one's request is turned down. One may take possession of something belonging to another if one has sufficient power or if there is love between the two. In other cases such an act would be fraught with dangerous consequences. In fact, of all the ascetics, only the arms of Parasurama are deemed to be effective and invincible and not those of anybody else.

No doubt, out of thoughtlessness, you have killed the animal already touched by our master's dart. However, he has pardoned your offence. Do not proceed further in the wrong path, do not bring a great disaster upon yourself. What do you gain by killing the boar? You could have easily let it

pass instead of casting a dart at it. You are a noble man. Conquer this thoughtlessness. Just as the wind at the dissolution of the world agitates even the great ocean so also the action of a thoughtless person exhausts the patience of even the most patient one. Our master, the leader of the Kiratas, has great mastery over the use of arms. Do not look down upon him as a mere dweller of the mountain. By earnest entreaties Indra has persuaded him to take residence in this mountain for the protection of the world.

Therefore, I request you to give back the dart to our venerable lord so that all your dangers may fade away and all your wishes may be fulfilled. Why, the companionship of the noble is the most desirable. Look, the lord of the Kiratas is resting yonder behind the trees. Go to him, earn his confidence and win his friendship. It will only augur well for you."

Arjuna's reply to Kirata messenger

Like ocean's billows striking a rock the arrogant words of the Kirata outraged Arjuna. He became angry, but did lose patience. He spoke as if he had not the least amount of indignation. He said :

"No doubt your beautiful speech will melt the heart of enemies even. Such an enviable power of expression can be acquired only by the accumulated merit of a thousand pious deeds. People who can translate their ideas into language are surely creditable. But in an assembly of the learned greater honour awaits those blessed few who can speak words of deep and profound implications. In a speech, some people commend profundity of thought, while others speak highly of felicity of expression. The taste of people being so different a speech satisfying all is indeed rare.

You are a subordinate entrusted with a duty. You have proved that in spite of being a forest-dweller you are an excellent speaker. Following the policy of appeasement you have placed temptations before me. Again, to confuse my judgement you have intimidated me. To get hold of the dart you have spoken commendably—your words, though highly illogical, appear to be convincing. But why didn't you request

your master to desist from an action that is destined to fail? A trusted subordinate sharing the master's joys and sorrows should also advise him rightly. A dart thrown would be lost to sight, which is inevitable. If one wants to recover it, one should look into the proper places and must not trespass upon the honour of the noble, for it may lead to grave dangers. Being desirous of burning down the Khandava forest Agni has given me innumerable darts. I have no desire for further darts which may even be coveted by gods. How can it be assumed that I shall be envious of a dart belonging to a Kirata? It is highly improper that I should be falsely accused. A good man never speaks ill of others. Only a bad man dishonours his fellow-being by denying the actual qualities and imputing false vices. Animals live in the forest freely. How can they belong to some particular individual? They only belong to one who can possess them by force. Your master should get rid of the idea that this boar is a possession of his. Vyasa advised me not to allow anybody to cross my path and that is why I have killed this charging animal. To keep one's vow is not blameworthy, it is praiseworthy.

A hunter kills animals for his own benefit. How can it be claimed that he works for the protection of the ascetics? Besides, the darts of both have simultaneously struck the boar. How can it be made certain that it has been killed by your master and not by me? If a ferocious animal attacks an ascetic who is helpless and without arms one may act for him out of kindness. But as everybody can easily see I am armed with a bow and darts. Why should your master have to act for me? Even assuming that he has cast the dart for my sake, how is it that he cannot forgo it in spite of achieving, by a single act, a double purpose—protection of an ascetic and annihilation of an enemy? Your advice that I should be a suppliant to your master is useless for me, for one who can acquire a thing on one's own might does not debase it by humble supplication. On a false pretext your master is trying to grab what cannot properly belong to him. It is not that he does not know the consequences of immodesty. But when destruction is imminent one loses the power of judgement. Your master, if he be so inclined, may ask for a sword, a dart, an armour, or an excellent bow. I shall fulfill his wish. Or,

if he is strong enough let him not be a suppliant, let him acquire it by force.

How can you refer to your master as an ideal friend, who is unjustly envious of an ascetic even ? By obstructing me in my rightful pursuit he has really acted like an enemy. I belong to the royal caste; I live by protecting the living beings. Your master is a hunter ; he lives by causing injury to the living beings. I am superior and he is inferior. How can friendship grow between the two ? A tusker never makes friends with a jackal. If a superior person engages in enmity with an inferior person his good name becomes tarnished. If again he establishes with him a bond of friendship his excellences tend to disappear. Thus both the alternatives are equally unacceptable, and a man with critical judgement only keeps off the inferior with contempt. The fame of a noble man is not tarnished by dishonour shown by a mean, inferior one, blinded by ignorance. That is why I have put up with all these arrogant and harsh words of your master. However, if he ever comes forward to take away the dart by force his plight would be similar to that of one who tries to grab the crown-jewel of a serpent throwing poison with its very eyes."

Kirata army proceeds

Aware of Arjuna's firm stand the Kirata went back to Siva and reported everything.

Then, following the command of its leader, the army of Kiratas, screaming dreadfully, rushed on, like the huge, roaring billows of the ocean agitated by winds at the end of the world. The fragrant breeze, carrying fine drops of water and clinging to the wavy banners, blew ahead of the warriors as if urging them to march on faster and faster. The sound of bowstrings and shields, amplified by the shouts of victory and cries of the warriors, did not find enough room within the mountain caves : so shaking the earth it spread over all the directions. The sun's rays reflected in the sharp and dreadful arms were lengthened further and reached every nook and corner of the earth. The Pramathas could move with equal ease on ground both even and uneven. Everybody wanted to precede the others and crowded together, making movement almost impossible. Thickly crowded by them the woods were

as if suffocated and felt very uneasy. The holes, groves and slopes were all filled up with Kirata warriors and the ground suddenly appeared to be rising, and as they passed on the ground immediately appeared to be sinking. Their heavy thighs scattered the mass of creepers ; the wind raised by their speedy movements made the sala and sandal trees whirl round ; thus the Pramathas threw the woods into utter confusion.

On the other hand, Arjuna was lean with penance, but full of inner strength ; he stood alone like a mighty tusker its body emaciated due to the exuding of rut. He resembled a terrible, glowing fire about to burn down the four quarters. He had taken up carelessly one dart from the quiver and was looking for victory like one searching for a true friend, casting leisurely glances at the army smarting under the insult of not recovering the dart and holding the Gandiva like unwavering patience which carries a man through all dangers and misfortunes. He showed no reaction, yet he was not to be trifled with. He was like the calm ocean, without wind and without waves, yet insurmountable. The boar, the demon, was lying dead at hand. By killing it Arjuna shone like the god of death. Or, as if he was the great Rudra at a sacrifice with animal offerings before him. He towered over all others taking away their glory by his inexhaustible patience and resembled a great mountain rendered inaccessible by dense forests abounding in inter-tangled creepers. His shoulders were like those of a massive bull ; the neck was thick ; and the chest was as hard as a bed of rocks. He was endeavouring to free the earth from all tyranny. So he himself appeared like the 'great boar' lifting the earth from the turbulent ocean at cosmic dissolution. He was as dark as emerald. His noble physical form glowed, robbing everybody else of their lustre. Like clear water reflecting the glorious sun he manifested through himself the primeval male (Visnu). His efforts were never to become futile and he bore within himself the world-subdueing fire.

The battle starts

At last the Pramatha army reached Arjuna, like a row of clouds at the rainy season arriving at a great mountain.

Earlier everybody had bragged that he alone would be sufficient for the enemy. But now due to the majesty of Arjuna in the garb of an ascetic they were rendered powerless and lost all sense of judgement. The Pramathas attacked him in a body, with their combined strength, throwing darts, for nothing is unfair in a war, victory being the only concern. The innumerous darts of the warriors flew in every direction like flocks of birds rising and flying away from a great forest. Causing tremor all over the woods, pervading the whole expanse of the sky and reaching upto the end of the quarters, the darts sounded like a shower of rain accompanied by strong wind. Living on air for six months, Arjuna was naturally emaciated. Yet this opportunity for a fight delighted him. As if his body became nourished and the armour, loose earlier, became tight. All around the ground and the sky darts showered like rains. Arjuna too became eager to show the might of his bow and his terrible, wrathful sight, like a menacing meteor, fell upon the Pramathas. Like Time at the final dissolution of the world, Arjuna moved, subdueing the glow of the sun by his showering darts, agitating violently the sea of air and shaking the whole earth along with its mountains. Many of the darts thrown collectively by the Kiratas were cut down on the very way before reaching the target, and like a king growing formidable by the judicious application of the expedients Arjuna gradually became invincible with his darts—darts unconquerable by opponents, warding off all dangers and travelling afar with their long and sharp heads. The Pramathas were in utter confusion : "Are the darts coming from heaven, or from the ground, or from the orb of the sun, or from the bow drawn only just once, or from the various limbs of the ascetic ?" The darts of Arjuna, though causing much pain to the Pramathas, could not take away their lives : so feeling guilty like subordinates failing to carry out their duties they passed out of sight after crossing the mountain. The darts sent later did not fall upon the wounds already made by the earlier darts, but created newer wounds in different parts, for it is not proper to afflict the afflicted. As many darts were born of Arjuna's bow as many enemies there were : like the moon's spreading rays closing lotuses all around they shortened the lives of Siva's warriors. The darts were straight,

full of vigour, unfailing, untiring and engaged in various kinds of actions. Thoroughly pierced by them the warriors could hardly stay in the fight. People, though standing on different spots, each sees the sun just before his eyes ; the warriors of Siva also found Arjuna, with his rays of the swift darts, present at the same time before each of them. Like the whirling dust in summer struck by the wind the army of the Pramathas, struck on all sides by the swift darts of Arjuna, became confused and moved aimlessly in different directions. Was it that the ascetic had created, by the power of penance, so many invisible bodies, which were throwing so many darts at the same moment ? Or, was it that all their own darts, driven back by his magical power, were attacking and killing them ? Possibly, the gods, drawn by his qualities or frightened by his power, had taken Arjuna's side and were showering darts upon them, lying concealed ; otherwise like the waves of the ocean how can they be so interminable ? And they thought to themselves : "Will this ascetic stop only after conquering us ? Will the world have peace and tranquility ?" Like forgiveness overpowered by wrath, good counsel by arrogance and human effort by hostile fate, the Pramatha army was rendered powerless by Arjuna. The glory of victory, as if afraid of Arjuna in his terrible form, immediately left the side of Siva's army.

As the battle went on all the animals became panic-stricken and Siva's warriors began to flee leaving behind their arms. The Pramathas went away as if not seeing that Siva himself was there, for in that hour of calamity their mind was in utter confusion. Arjuna was full of pity for Siva's army as it fled losing all hope of victory. Though all but he had fled, the battlefield appeared to be filled with his presence alone as he towered over it with sword, bow and arrows, the conqueror of warriors both moving in and without a carriage, who could even repulse Kartikeya, the son of Siva. Very slowly he followed the Pramathas badly shaken by fear and did not rush upon them, for there is no point in afflicting the afflicted.

Kartikeya's encouragement to the fleeing Pramathas

At this moment, indignant at the performance of the army under his command, Kartikeya said, with a grin :

"O Pramathas ! You are the ones who find equal pleasure in battles and sports. You have the power to defeat even the gods. Why are you tarnishing your fame in this most unbefitting manner ? These long swords of yours lengthened further by the sun's rays shining upon them are as if ridiculing you—what is the use of swords for those who are fleeing ? Regardless of your dignity and far-reaching fame, I do not know, to avoid what grave danger you are running away. This ascetic is neither a demon nor the lord of serpents nor a goblin with a mountain-like form. He is only a human being predominated by the quality of *rajas*, who can be easily conquered. As if out of compassion, this ascetic is striking you too mildly and driving you like a herd of animals goaded on by the mild strokes of the branch of a tree on the back. A man defeated by an inferior or a man who strikes an inferior is not a true man. What then is to be said of you who have not only been defeated by an inferior but also have fled ?

Besides, you should not consider yourselves defeated, for your master remains undefeated as yet. A man who never has any quality is better than a man who acquires quality but parts with it very soon ; just as an ornament originally without gems is better than one from which gems have been torn off. This ascetic has neither speedy chariots nor swiftly running horses nor mighty trumpeting elephants nor an army of foot-soldiers. So what is there to be afraid of ? Like a lake full of mud after the sun has dried up its water you are also full of disgrace now being rendered powerless. Fighting in heaven you have defeated so many formidable enemies, even the powerful demons ; but you are now running away from an insignificant human being. Like a husband protecting his straying wife Siva would now come to your rescue, now that you have turned your back upon the enemy. So do not be overcome by fear. You can easily destroy the most terrible of the enemies. You are the protectors of the world, you are the cruellest and you have terrible forms. You should march on gallantly.

How is it that you have given up your pride and dignity as warriors ? This enemy of ours is handsome, full of glow, courageous and wielding a sharp sword. He is quite capable of fighting back and is not afraid of even the strongest enemy.

So you should face him and not flee from him. In this battle, horses have been brought down and their lifeless bodies are obstructing the movement of chariots. Large elephants lying dead in pools of blood are appearing like hills streams flowing out of them. Some horses scared by dancing headless trunks are throwing off their riders. The quivers filled with air are making such shrieking noise that the ear-drums are going to be torn. In such a terrible battle heroes rejoice, but cowards shrink from it. In earlier times, while fighting the demons, you engaged yourselves enthusiastically in fierce battles, but now that very kind of battle is destroying your spirit and valour and you are turning your back."

Battle of arrows between Arjuna and Siva

While Kartikeya was thus trying to discipline the Pramathas who were running in all directions, Siva appeared there and stopping them stood with a smile. Tormented by Arjuna's darts and shamefully trying to return to the battle field, they were delighted by Siva's consoling words 'Don't be afraid'. Terrified and smarting under a feeling of inferiority and without any joyous cry, the Pramathas considered Sankara (the god) to be Sankara (bestower of the good) in the true sense of the term. As if floating helplessly in the vast impassible ocean of the enemy's innumerable vicious darts the army looked upon Siva with great relief as the safe coast-line on the other side. Like a giant tree facing the sun and casting a deep shadow behind, Siva came forward and the fleeing army reassembled behind him. As soon as Siva cast a dart at Arjuna the twang of his bow echoed through the quarters and almost split the Indrakila mountain into two. The Pramatha army stood still in apprehension and waited for the mighty combat that would follow as if painted on a canvas.

The swarm of darts sent by Arjuna was easily cut down by Siva and Arjuna too moved about undaunted repulsing the darts coming from Siva. Shaking fearlessly his great bow with a tawny and sparkling string Arjuna looked like the glowing sun accompanied by a bright meteor. Like dense clouds obstructing the sun's rays the darts of Arjuna blocked the movement of Siva's darts. Siva, too, thwarting the shower of Arjuna's darts by his own flow of the same, blocked the

path of the sun. The innumerable rows of golden darts sent by Siva, moving about the heaven and the sky and deafening the ears, appeared like a series of lightning-streaks. Arjuna's darts were driven back and he was pierced by those of Siva, yet he was not perturbed because of his own valour and heroism. Arjuna, dark-complexioned and as graceful as a lion, desirous of victory and fighting dexterously with Siva, stood in all his glory like the king of mountains employed by the creator to protect the earth and the source of various useful things and highly praised by demons and sages alike. Entrusted with the task of protecting the earth, very dear to Indra, showering gifts and desiring victory in battle, Arjuna shone like the Airavata, capable of fighting the demons tormenting the earth, very dear to Indra, as white as nectar and overflowing with rut. Very dear to Krisna, sent down to the earth to rid it of its tormentors and praised by demons, sages and the goddess of fortune, Arjuna appeared like Anantanaga, employed to protect the earth, dear to Visnu, fond of nectar and praised by all. As his darts were cut down by Siva and his efforts proved to be in vain, as if fire hissed out of the various pores of his body. With his tawny matted hair and bright glow of anger he resembled the Himalaya brightened by glowing herbs and a spreading forest-fire. To impress upon furious Arjuna his own superiority and invincibility Siva presently threw one dart which would strike him hard but would not kill him. It went out of the rounded bow like a single ray out of the sun's orb, and to obstruct it, Arjuna covered the whole earth with a shower of his own darts. Meeting with his own darts the darts of Siva coming swiftly from all directions and pervading all the quarters, Arjuna appeared to be innumerous in number to the sages as he shifted his position with lightning speed. The combat went on and the darts of the two flew over all around. The Pramathas, the slayers of demons, looked on in wonder. The devotees of Siva, the sages and the gods, all assembled in the sky. Everybody was full of admiration for Arjuna for his courage and spirit.

Arjuna perturbed at Kirata commander's invincibility

The Kirata commander's extraordinary skill in battle in-

furiated Arjuna. But at the same time it set him thinking upon the reason. He thought to himself :

"What is the cause of my failure ? Here there is no army of mighty mountain-like elephants wandering about. Here there is no row of chariots with flying banners roaring like clouds. Here there are no cavalry with sparkling spears and dangling Yak-tails crowding the various quarters. Here the sky is not being filled up with weapons thrown by warriors with terrible shouts, as bright as flashes of lightning reflecting the sun's rays. Here columns of dust raised by the running horses' feet and the chariot-wheels, resembling the dense smoke of the approaching god of death, is not being scattered by the wind. Here the vision of the heavenly maidens coming forward to greet the heroes is not being obstructed by a dust-cloud as gray as the complexion of an ass. Here the rumbling of moving chariot-wheels, the neighing of horses and the trumphets of elephants, mingling together, are not drowning the roar of the large kettle-drums. Here heroes hankering after lasting fame, lying in a swoon on being hurt by the opponents, are not being soothed by drops of cool water from their elephants' trunks. Here there is no river of constantly flowing blood which drying up would create barriers of mud making passage difficult. Here the garlands of Mandara flowers, coming down from heaven, as cool as the dear one's lap, are not soothing the heroes whose chests have been bruised by the elephants' tusks. Here no army or mighty elephants, looking like winged mountains with their large ears and roaring like the turbulent sea is breaking into the lines of warriors dispersing them in confusion. Here the path of the attacking heroes is not being blocked by irate elephants their trunks completely cut off. Here warriors are not dying in their thousands, like living beings at the final dissolution of creation, so that the god of death may rush on spreading wide his jaws to swallow up all the three worlds. My power has destroyed so many of the most formidable warriors. But, now, in this insignificant battle, it is failing. As if the solar rays are being subdued by the lunar rays. Is it a kind of magic ? Am I out of my mind ? Have I completely lost my power ? Am I now a different person, and not my own self ? These darts of mine flying from the same old bow are not as effective as before.

This Kirata is rending the sky with the twang of his bow. It appears he is not really such as his attire suggests. One's true identity though sought to be concealed is betrayed by one's actions. His bow is roaring constantly, as if in anger; the string drawn once remains drawn as if for ever: darts are being thrown as if without being taken out of the quiver; and at the time of throwing as if no clenching of the fist is necessary. His two shoulders are fixed and slightly bent forward: the neck is not moving in the slightest: it follows that he is putting in no effort; with a face undistorted by emotions he is standing like a rock. Sometimes for adjustment he has to move his feet, but the body remains still. With great dexterity he is hitting targets both moving and unmoving. He marks well the errors of the opponent, and rectifies his own ones just in a moment. Such accomplishments are not possible even for Bhisma and Drona; their presence in a Kirata is indeed all the more inexplicable. No ordinary weapon would be effective upon him. He is to be subdued by some divine weapon. Like a growing disease even a small but powerful enemy may cause great harm".

The two fight with magic weapons

Deliberating thus, with a view to take away the power and strength of the enemy, Arjuna took up the dart of 'great sleep', like a cloudy night going to spread impenetrable darkness. A deep dark shadow, like the dense smoke of a constantly burning forest-fire, enveloping the sun even, spread all over the army of Siva. A terribly powerful sleep overpowered the Pramathas and they lost consciousness like ordinary people losing the power of speech on entering upon an assembly of the learned. Some of the warriors stood motionless, just leaning on their bows with the strings put on, as if relying on a trusted and long-acquainted friend. The weapons of some again, totally useless now, just slipped away from their hands, like fruits of actions coming to nothing with a hostile fate. And others stood, as if nothing had happened, leaning gently against trees, with closed eyes, like tuskers indolent due to flow of rut. Then, there issued forth a mass of tawny rays from the temple of Siva: the sages bowed their heads taking it for the morning sun rising from Sumeru's summit; like right knowledge destroying ignorance it presently made away with

the Pramatha's dark sleep. Tinging with red the clouds all around and spreading like the glow of dawn, it opened up the eyes of the Pramathas like the sun opening up the lotuses in the morning. The Pramathas regained consciousness, shone again in their glory, like the ends of quarters with stars when the clouds had been carried away. As if, after the passing away of the night, the sky went up, the quarters cleared up, the sun's rays spread farther and farther ; the day recovered its full glory.

His effort thus rendered futile, Arjuna next sent forth the dart of 'snake-bond'. As restless as flashes of lightning, sticking out tongues spitting venomous fire, thousands of snakes invaded the whole sky, striking terror into the hearts of one and all. As extended as the trunks of elephants guarding the quarters and as blue as sparkling sapphires, the rows of snakes appeared like waves in the ocean of blue sky. From the eyes of the snakes capable of killing by mere sight fire poured forth like molten gold and illuminating all the quarters appeared like terrible meteors. The sky was over-run with snakes and the path of heavenly creatures was obstructed. The sky, losing all its charm, as if burnt all around, and everything choked with smoke, and it looked like a city under siege. But, then, Siva immediately applied the Garuda spell to bring in a troop of Garudas which would drive away the army of snakes like proper administration suppressing a rebellion fomented by the enemy. With untwinkling eyes like the gods, shining like flashes of lightning, the Garudas filled up the great sky. A violent storm resulted from the movement of their large wings, which carried in a swirl even the great trees upto the sky. As the Garudas flew in groups through the sky it was as if pushed back by their huge chests. With its valleys set in a whirl by the wind of their speedy movement and assuming a reddish hue being pervaded by the glow of their golden wings the Himalaya looked as if it was drunk. Like the dusk turning the sky and the earth into a sea of red they covered the sun, but there were no shadows due to the glow of their wings. Just as the wrong resulting from a fault in the performance of a sacrifice is remedied by a powerful expiatory rite so also the troop of snakes was completely subdued by the host of strong Garudas.

The incompetence of the dart of 'snake-bond' infuriated Arjuna. So he then took up the 'fire-dart' capable of producing fire without any fuel. Soon a fierce fire flared up as if to annihilate all the living beings : simulating the name with its flames rising on all directions it looked like a terrible lion about to pounce upon the prey. As if overpowering the sun's rays with their own and scattering about big sparks the fire raged on with a roar like the splitting of huge rocks. Aided by the wind the fire went on, looking like high golden ramparts, like a mountain with lofty summits or like a dense forest of blooming red Palasas. Dense watery clouds, as black as collyrium, licked from below by the soaring flames, had their bottoms devoid of water which turned white like pearls.

As the three worlds were going to be swallowed up by the terrible flames, Siva applied the Varuna dart to avert a disaster. Presently, there came forth dense, dark clouds as huge as greater mountains, which poured down incessantly large rivers of water. The flames became subdued and lost their extreme heat ; a peculiar sound rose, as if cold water was sprinkled upon a heated sheet of iron. Entering into that great fire like pieces of white clouds, the rivers of water boiled up at once and spread masses of smoke all over the sky. With its smokes of various colours as the banners—yellowish, dark blue and pale red, the fire, surpassing even the beauty of the rainbow, shone like a bright piece of silk swaying in the wind. The roar of the burning fire increased as it was struck by the rivers of water coming down from the clouds : its glow increased as it mingled with the flashes of lightning : giving out masses of smoke, the fire, although on its way to extinction, became all the more conspicuous. If the root is cut out, even the strongest falls down. So, even that terrible fire, shattered by columns of water had to relent and finally, died out. The clouds, successful in their mission, soon disappeared. The sky, as if purified by fire, shone all the more brightly and clearly.

Arjuna loses his arms and armour

Arjuna was no doubt a great and expert warrior. But whatever darts he used against the enemy all proved futile, like the best of efforts put on by even the righteous rendered

useless by adverse fate. Still, he did not lose heart. 'I have valour and this bow of mine', he thought 'who is going to defeat me ?' He was elated having this opportunity to fight with a formidable opponent, but was also dejected being overpowered by him. He appeared like a mountain-fire, bright yet throwing up a dark cloud of smoke. He was proud of his lineage and had great self-respect. He was very much aggrieved that his fame was thus tarnished. He felt as if his wife was being forcibly carried off. He resolved to fight back once again. His spirit rose, although he was pained that no other battle had consumed so much of his energy. Like a great serpent spitting venom out of its eyes he had his eyes full of angry tears. His hair was dishevelled due to the exertion of fighting and his eyes were red due to anger. As if to cool him down beads of perspiration appeared on his face. Like an elephant pulling the top of a mountain with its trunk. Arjuna drew his bow with his own hand and a sound rose like that of a cloud's roar, which caused great anxiety in the minds of Kirata warriors like an unpleasant thought weighing heavily upon the mind. Arjuna showered darts all over with great speed and dexterity ; the Kirata army could not see anything but only heard sounds ; they were completely overpowered, like living beings by their innate nature. But like jealousy failing to influence the impartial, like speech failing to describe the Brahman and like autumnal sunbeam failing to warm up the snow-covered valleys of the Himalaya, the darts of Arjuna had no effect upon Siva. Finding his army in a sorry plight—that its spirit had completely broken down—he decided to retaliate and like the scorching sun drying up all the waters he destroyed in a moment all the darts of Arjuna.

Arjuna put his hand into the quiver for a dart, but it was empty. As if a thirsty elephant was entering its trunk into a mountain-hole for water from which it had already been drunk up by another. Or, as if one was supplicating in vain to a person wealthy but suddenly reduced to a pauper. With a broken heart he stood with the two empty quivers, like the earth with the eastern and the western oceans completely dried up at the end of cosmic dissolution. With deep sorrow and great reluctance he moved his hand away from the quivers.

as if parting with a trusted friend who had served long but was now incapable. Like an expert debator completely baffling his opponent by pointing out the most fatal fallacies in his argument Siva struck very hard on Arjuna's chest with a number of iron darts. His darts tore off the armour from Arjuna's body like a strong wind carrying away the covering of dark cloud from the face of the sun. Even without his armour Arjuna glowed like a long sword drawn out of its sheath, like a great serpent which had cast off its skin, like a lion rushing out of the cave when awakened by the roar of cloud and like a smokeless fire blazing in the dark night. Arjuna was seized by such a terrible anger that he could hardly feel anything as the darts struck : as if the anger acted like a protective armour. With blood all over his body he rushed at Siva, shaking the earth with his footsteps and hurled at the god the bow itself, bent like the moon's digit and as hard as India's thurderbolt. As the bow was coming at a great speed towards him Siva absorbed it within himself like the great sage Jahnu swallowing up the river Ganga spreading through various streams. Then he struck Arjuna hard with more darts and he was thrown off at a distance. But, still, he fought back with his only weapon left, the sword. He played it with great vehemence and for a moment cut down the darts coming from the god. But, presently, by the impact of Siva's dart, the blade of the sword upto the hilt was broken and fell down on the ground shining for an instant like sparks of lightning.

Arjuna and Siva box and wrestle

Arjuna was now completely overpowered. He had lost all, his armour, bow and darts. An insane rage seized him. But he had nothing to fall back upon except the bare hands. So he started to shower huge rocks upon the god. It was however soon stopped by Siva with his own shower of darts. Next, Arjuna uprooted large trees and hurled them at the god. But they were all cut into pieces—their bark, branches and leaves were all separated—and the ground strewn with them assumed a variegated colour : as if one was making preparations for the worship of the battle-god. As he madly rushed on, Arjuna suddenly found Siva close in front of him

like a huge golden rock. With his two fists he struck vehemently on the god's chest, but he put up with it unconcernedly, like an affectionate father conniving at the mischief of his only child.

Then Siva also left behind his bow and arrow, and started to batter Arjuna with his fist as hard as an iron hammer. The sound of their mutual combat was as loud as the splitting of rocks echoing through the mountain caves. With his large chest full of streaks of blood flowing out of the wounds, Siva shone like a mass of cloud newly reddened by the setting sun, and the fists of Arjuna beat again and again, in vain, upon it like the violent billows of the ocean against the towering Sahya mountain. Then, as the god struck simultaneously with his two fists on his two shoulders with a tremendous forces, Arjuna staggered behind a few steps, like an intoxicated man, and his eyes rolled about. Incensed at this assault he rushed forward and forcibly held the god's two arms each with his own ones. The locked arms of the two powerful warriors as if created an unbreakable chain and the whole mountain shook with their combat. Both fought with equal skill and speed and one could hardly distinguish them and decide who was up and who was down at the moment. The mountain as if unable to stand this turmoil grew apprehensive of its own destruction; when they moved, it also moved: when they remained still, it also became still: when they bent down, it also bent down: and when they stood up, it also appeared to stand up. Time and again the two wrestlers separated from each other and produced a loud sound by flapping the arms together. The banks of streams were broken by their heavy footsteps and the water overflowed. As Siva swiftly rose up in the air, Arjuna also proceeded with great speed and took hold of his feet before he could reach the ground. The god was taken by surprise, and though for a moment he thought of throwing Arjuna down on the ground, he closely embraced him instead, for he was pleased not so much with his penance as much with his valour and heroism.

Siva reveals himself

Then Siva appeared in his own charming form, covered with ashes as white as snow and his forehead glowing with

the moon's digit. Arjuna bowed down in reverence and in great amazement, once again found himself united with his bow and quiver ; his armour clung to the body as before and the sword got into his grip ; he was healthy and full of vigour as if nothing had happened. Clouds sprinkled the earth with a drizzle, beautiful Parijata flowers showered down from heaven and all over the clear sky spread the deep sound of kettle-drums which sounded out of their own accord, without being struck. As Indra arrived followed by the guardians of quarters travelling in aerial cars bedecked with shining gems and jewels, the sky appeared to be full of newly risen stars. As the large swans carrying the aerial cars, with their ornaments on the neck jingling sweetly, spread their wings beautifully, it appeared they were lovingly embracing the sky. Spreading as a canopy garlands of Mandara flowers which greatly delighted the swarm of bees, Marut appeased Siva, seated on the white bull like a mass of cloud.

Arjuna praises the great god

Arjuna, elated at this glorious success of having a direct vision of the great god in person, began to pay his respect :

"Simply by taking refuge unto you with devotion a person can conquer death and then, even the whole world can take refuge unto him. So long as a person does not bow down to you, the supreme one, calamities constantly befall him, none of his desires is fulfilled and people never show him any respect. Afflicted by the miseries of the world wise men strive for liberation, and they worship only you, for you unfailingly confer upon them the fruits of labour without expecting anything in return. You are like a unique holy place that can be reached without travelling afar, that yields results immediately in this very birth, that easily leads one beyond this ocean of sufferings and that is capable of fulfilling all one's desires. Even without realising your true nature, but simply by meditating upon your form with devotion, one can attain liberation. Great sages advise people about how to proceed on the path of salvation : but they themselves and the people alike are ultimately dependent for the final release upon none but you who alone can dtstroy all their past deeds. In reality you are formless. But, out of compassion, to release people

from sufferings created by their own action, you have assumed a pleasant physical form. You are free from all attachment, yet you are the one most given to amusements (e.g. you have sportingly fought with me). You have your spouse within the body (in the *ardha-narisvara* form), yet you are free from lust. You are the world's most adorable one, yet you bow down at dawn to the creator Brahma. Your ways are indeed inscrutable. Your attire is the skin of an elephant. The girdle round your waist is a serpent with shining gems. Your garland is a row of skulls. And your sandal dust is nothing but ashes. But even these adorn your body as beautifully as the moon's digit on the forehead. In reality you are without a body. But for some reason beyond our comprehension you have assumed an extra-ordinary body, half male and half female. Indeed, in your case alone, such an incongruity lends charm and beauty. You are the unique one. Like ordinary beings you are not subject to birth, decay or death. Nothing in this world is comparable to you and you can be compared to nothing else. You are the destroyer of all things, movable and immovable. This entire world can breathe only because of you. You alone can justly dispense the fruits of actions to each individual. You are the ultimate cause of all the causes. In this world, whoever—a god, a human being or a demon—may attain success in any sphere, that success would only be the result of paying obeisance to you. You are pervading the world in the form of air, which holds the three worlds with its own velocity, by whose impetus the holy *brahman* is articulated through speech and which can do away with all sins and imporities. I bow to it. You are pervading the world in the form of fire with innumerable rising flames, which is dear to the ascetics practising the severest penances and which can burn up completely all the seeds of suffering. I bow to it. You are pervading the world in the form of water, which cools down the living beings constantly burning in the fire of worldly existence and brings about final peace and quietitude. I bow to it. You are pervading the world in the form of *akasa* which is ubiquitous, which envelops all things but is itself not enveloped by any, which has neither beginning nor end and which is beyond the power of sense-organs. I bow to it. You are minuter than the minutest : yet

you hold the world within yourself; I bow to thee. You are the nearest (being within ourselves) and you are the farthest (being not grasped by any sense-organ); I bow to thee. You are the supreme lord of our speech and mind; I bow to thee. Out of ignorance I have hurled weapons at you. But you must pardon my offence for you are the most merciful one and given to forgiveness. I entreat you to be kind enough to confer upon me the most excellent one of the weapons by which I shall be able to subdue the enemy of Yudhisthira, the upholder of *dharma*".

Arjuna is crowned with success

As Arjuna was thus soliciting, Siva comforted him and taught him the science of Dhanurveda as a preliminary to receiving the glorious Pasupata. And finally, Arjuna attained it. Indra and the other gods also blessed him and invested him with various other powerful weapons. "Go and conquer the enemy", said Siva and he bowed down at his feet.

Successful in his mission, as if already carrying the glory of victory, Arjuna went back and united with Yudhisthira.

4

The Poetry of Bharavi

Undoubtedly, classical Sanskrit poetry reached its zenith of excellence in Kalidasa. Of the composers of the Mahakavya succeeding him Bharavi is perhaps the earliest and certainly the most prominent. Thus, at the outset, one may be tempted to make a comparison between the two. It would however be unwise to expect too much of such a comparison, for both in quantity and quality Kalidasa far excels Bharavi. The former, as is well known, has to his credit at least three dramas and four poems of varying size and nature, whereas the latter, as we have already noted, has left behind only the *Kiratarjuniya*. Again, as R. C. Dutt has put it succintly : "Bharavi is by a long way inferior to Kalidasa in all the qualities which make a great and a true poet. In the richness of poetic fancy, in true tenderness and pathos, and even in the sweetness and melody of verse, Kalidasa is incomparably a greater poet."

However, even without disputing the truth and justification of the above, we should not lose sight of the positive achievements of Bharavi, for underestimation is as undesirable as overestimation.

A traditional verse of criticism which aims at pointing out the individual speciality of four major poets in Sanskrit belonging to different ages states that Kalidasa excels in similies, Bharavi in *artha-gaurava*, Dandin in the sweetness of expression and Magha in all the three qualities.

There is a little bit of controversy about the exact interpretation of the expression *artha-gaurava*.

Some are inclined to take the expression in the sense of 'depth of meaning'. Bharavi's work, it is pointed out, is full of statements which are thought provoking and have far-reaching implications. In every canto, whatever may be the

subject of description—politics, amorous sports, natural beauty or a battle, we find strewn comments and remarks which speak of profound wisdom, deep study of human nature, invaluable guidance in worldly matters and truths of universal application. The devise generally employed by the poets for this purpose is the figure of speech known as *arthantara-nyasa*. As one of the editors of the *Kiratarjuniya* shows, on the basis of a comparative study, among some of the major poets, Bharavi is the foremost in employing this particular figure of speech.

Others try to explain the implication of the remark in a different way. The two essential ingredients of poetry are *sabda* and *artha*, word and meaning, expression and significance. Thus, according to the priority or otherwise of any of these two elements, poetry may be said to be divided into two classes, *sabda-pradhana* or according greater priority to expression and *artha-pradhana* or according greater priority to signification. It is therefore meant that Bharavi attaches supreme importance to what he seeks to express, the theme or subject-matter, rather than to the expressions as such. The expressed comes first and the expression is subservient to it, adjusting itself according to the nature of the former. Perhaps that is why he is not generally keen on achieving melody and sweetness. 'Bharavi's subject does not call for light treatment. With his command of polished and stately phrase, he is quite at home in serious and elevated themes'.

It may however be pointed out that the expression *artha-gaurava* has been used by the poet himself. In the second canto, while trying to calm down Bhima after his fiery speech, Yudhisthira says to him 'it is not that your words lack in *artha-gaurava*'. Mallinatha, the most celebrated commentator of Sanskrit poetry, explains it as *artha-bhuyastva*, abundance of meaning, manifoldness of signification. Perhaps the idea is that Bharavi's words besides being expressive of their usual meanings are also pregnant with further deeper significance. Here and there, a word or an expression, though apparently not much striking, has been so employed in a particular context that on second thoughts it tends to reach beyond the ordinary meaning. May be this capability of suggesting a deeper signification is what is meant by *artha-*

gaurava. An instance may be cited from the very first canto. The spy appointed by Yudhisthira in exile to know about the internal affairs and administration of Duryodhana comes back with the unhappy tidings of the latter's success. As the reason for his being truthful even then, he says that the master should not be deceived by the subordinates. Apparently, the meaning is clear, true and logical enough. Yet quite a deeper significance may be revealed when the word used to mean a subordinate—the word *anujivin*—is considered with a bit of care. Literally; the word means 'one who lives afterwards'. That is, a subordinate is one who lives after the master. He has no independent existence. As long as the master lives he too lives ; as soon as the master is destroyed he too is destroyed. This is the actual reason why a subordinate should not deceive his master. It would be like deceiving one's own self. Not only for his master's sake but also for his own sake he should remain honest and truthful.

Another significant comment on the nature of Bharavi's poetry has been made by Mallinatha in his introduction to the commentary : *narikela-phala-sammitam vaco bharaveh*, the words of Bharavi are like the cocoanut-fruit. But what does the commentator mean ?

Some are inclined to take the comment in its literal sense. The cocoanut is a fruit with a hard shell outside and sweet milky kernel inside. A cocoanut is not easily enjoyable ; to enjoy it one has to put on some effort. Similar is the case with Bharavi's poetry. Its charm or beauty is not laid bare immediately one reads or listens to it. To enjov it one has to activate the intellect and ask for some explanation. Thus, for example, when the etymology of a particular word has been discussed or a complicated simile based on difficult puns has been explained or some philosophical tenet has been clearly expounded, then alone one should be able to appreciate the poetic capability of Bharavi.

Others think that it would be unkind to consider Bharavi's poetry difficult and obscure. The similarity with cocoanut should not be carried too far. No doubt difficult verses are there. But they are rather exceptions and not generalities. Occasional obscurity is common to most of the poets. It should not make us blind to his points of excellences. Bharavi

himself has time and again commended (through the speeches of his heroes) the quality of *prasada* or perspicuity, which is quite opposed to obscurity. There is no reasonable ground to suppose that he should preach one thing and practice another. On the whole, his poetry is free from obscurity and expressions and ideas of charm and attraction are not difficult to find.

Thus the actual implication of the comment is perhaps a different one. Like a piece of cocoanut's kernel yielding more and more sweet milky juice when chewed again and again Bharavi's words also become more and more enjoyable when meditated upon with care. The expressions are far from being obsecure; they easily yield their ordinary meanings; but deeper significances are revealed as they are once again turned over in mind.

From yet another point of view the similarity with cocoanut has been sought to be explained. A cocoanut can remove both hunger and thirst. Bharavi's poetry too satisfies hunger of knowledge and thirst for aesthetic enjoyment. Perhaps Bharavi also subscribed to the idea that poetry should not be mere poetry. A piece of ideal poetry should not only provide its reader with aesthetic enjoyment but also contribute to his fund of knowledge in the various branches of learning—philosophies, arts and sciences.

As already noted, traditionally, Kalidasa is considered the most adept in the use of simile or *upama*. But *upama* is the most basic one of the embellishments of poetry and no author in Sanskrit literature can hope to have the term 'poet' applied to him unless he shows at least some proficiency in the composition of similes. As if the excellence of similes is an index of an author's excellence in the poetic art and the poets are often nicknamed after their peculiar similes. For example, Kalidasa is called *dipa-sikha-kalidasa*, Bharavi *atapatra-bharavi* and Magha *ghanta-magha*. Thus, though a comparison with Kalidasa would be unjust, there is no denying the fact that Bharavi has made us a gift of quite a large number of similes which are pretty and attractive and undoubtedly speak of his power of imagination. Besides the most common and generally accepted similes of Sanskrit literature he has presented

us with quite a few similes of his own which would be marked for ingenuity.

Ingenious indeed is his comparison of Indra in the disguise of a tottering old man leaning on his staff, to him an invaluable asset, to a man given to good food and overcasting being as much dependent upon a favourable wife (xi. 5). Although his limbs were very emaciated, he appeared to be carrying a heavy burden. Like a glutton living on the favours of his good-natured wife he was held on his feet by a staff'. Or, we may take the one comparing the scattering swarm of bees to a broken chain (vii. 31) : 'As the lordly elephant, after sleeping off the fatigue of the journey, rose from the resting ground met with the flow of fragrant rut, the swarm of bees feasting thereupon scattered, as if the chain it was bound with was broken into pieces by the sudden upward movement'.

There are some similes comparing the conscious to the unconscious. A good example is the one comparing the ascetic Arjuna at Indrakila to a tall Tamala tree (vi. 23) : 'Carrying on his head the matted hair that had turned tawny with repeated ritual bathing he resembled a rising Tamala tree its top bathed in the rays of the early sun'. Or, for example, disguised Indra has been compared to a lake (xi. 4) : 'With his two eyes shrivelling at the end and hidden by the bushy eyebrows greying with age, he appeared like a lake full of withering lotuses their petals robbed of lustre by a hail-storm'.

Good examples of the opposite—the unconscious being compared to the conscious—are also not rare. Thus the withering reed in the autumn is a frustrated lover (iv. 34) : 'The reed is bending down its head : but the lady lotus does not pay any heed, having no affection for him. So along with his companion, the water, he is withering away and turning yellow like one tormented by unrewarded love'. Or, the great mountain is one intoxicated by drink (xi. 46) : 'The Himalaya, all its valleys violently shaken by the wind raised by the speedy movement (of the Garudas), swayed, as if drunk, after swallowing with its cave-mouths the glow of the golden-winged birds as red as wine'.

Sometimes the concrete is successfully compared to the abstract. As king Yudhisthira takes his seat before the sage

Vyasa (ii. 58) : 'With an attentive mind, first the king offered his obeisance to the great sage in a befitting manner, and afterwards, being permitted by him, adorned the seat like self-restraint adorning the knowledge of the scriptures'. The description of Arjuna fighting with Siva also gives us a good example (xvii. 49) : 'The ascetic (Arjuna) was seized by a great fury and lost the sensation of pain. All his limbs became devoid of feeling. He paid no heed to the host of darts coming into him. As if his wrath covered him like an iron armour'.

Some of the similes again speak of experience in worldly matters. Thus, to bring back the fleeing Kirata army into position Kartikeya says (xv. 19) : 'You have become totally ineffective and shown your back to the enemy. Still, the lord (Siva) would protect you like one offering protection to one's wife who has deviated from the right path'. Or, we may take the picture of Siva bearing with Arjuna's fury as he struck on his chest (xvii. 64) : -The destroyer of the god of love calmly bore with the offence of the son of Pandu like an affectionate father forgiving the offence of his dearest and only child'.

Some of the similes make use of Puranic legends. The advent of the night is thus described : 'Just like the primeval boar throwing up the earth (out of the waters of ultimate destruction) with its tusk as reddish as a golden spade, the moon threw off the deep darkness with its orb as red as a clear coral'. Or, as Arjuna is described (xiv. 41) : 'He was as dark as emerald. His noble physical form glowed, robbing everybody else of their lustre. Like clear water reflecting the glorious sun he manifested in a human form the ancient male'.

The poet's acquaintance with the basic tenets of Indian philosophy is revealed by a few similes. Consider, for example, the description of the Himalaya (v. 22) : 'To those who aspire after the pure and highest abode of the Brahman which is absolutely free from cycles of birth and decay, true knowledge which dispels the darkness of ignorance and brings to an end one's confinement to worldly existence may come from also this mountain, which is thus comparable to the scripture'. Or, Siva renders Arjuna's dart of great sleep futile (xvi. 32) : 'Just as the knowledge of the true nature of things destroys

ignorance so also the glow of Siva drove away the Pramatha army's sleep, bringing them from darkness to light'.

Like Kalidasa our poet too has to his credit a grammatical simile (xiii. 19) : 'Just as both Siva and Arjuna were about to strike the boar, it came between them for sure destruction, like an *anubandha*, ultimately to be elided, coming between *prakrti* and *pratyaya*'.

However, without denying what is due to him, we must note that some of his similes are not as happy as one would have expected them to be. There are similes which are rather unintelligible (e.g. i. 24, ii. 3 etc.) and there are also similes which offend against good taste. He has, for example, very unjustly compared the pure and simple womenfolk of the cowherds living in the forest and uninitiated into artificiality and conquetishness to dancing courtesans (iv. 17). Again, describing the swarm of swans as the breast-covering of the lady Ganges, as Arjuna was climbing up the Indrakila, is not quite proper, for the hero was then proceeding to practise penance and not on an amorous adventure (vi. 6). And when tormented by the vehement penance of Arjuna the sages approached Siva, they found him standing, enjoying the touch of the plump and high hump of his bull which was like the twin large breast of Uma wet with sandal-paste (xii. 20) !.

Still, then, there is no doubt that Bharavi was a powerful poet and one should not be incapable of appreciating his qualities. Although his poem is based on a wellknown episode of the *Mahabharata*, his treatment of it instantly reveals his power and insight. 'This theme Bharavi has chosen to expand and illustrate with all the resources of a refined and elaborate art. The opening shows at once the hand of the artist : in the epic the discussion of the brothers arises merely from the dreary plight in which they are placed : Bharavi begins instead with the return of a spy whom Yudhisthira has sent to report on the deeds of Suyodhana — as he is always styled'. He has also made some good innovations. For example, 'the introduction of Siva's host, of its struggles under Skanda's leadership with the hero, and the whole episode of the contest with magic weapons are the fruit of the poet's imagination'.

Very briefly, but quite rightly, Keith has pointed out the excellences of Bharavi: 'There is no doubt of the power of

Bharavi in description ; his style at its best has a calm dignity which is certainly attractive, while he excels also in the observation and record of the beauties of nature and of maidens. The former quality is revealed repeatedly in the first canto, the very first line of which strikes the true note of high policy'. 'Evening comes, the sun sets, the moon arises—the banal theme wins new effect through the poet's skill'. Plenty of examples of 'calm dignity' may easily be found in the first and the second cantos in the speeches of various persons, which are an invaluable contribution of Bharavi. His power of recording the beauties of nature is very well illustrated by the fourth canto describing the autumn and the fifth canto describing the Himalaya. The lovely maidens and their worthy lovers are described picturesquely in all their glory and prettiness, through the various phases of love, in the eighth and the ninth cantos.

Side by side, however, one should also make a note of the poet's imperfections. As Keith has summarised them: 'Bharavi, however, is guilty of errors of taste from which Kalidasa is free. Especially in canto XV he sets himself to try *tours de force* of the most foolish kind......... Thus one verse has the first and third, second and fourth lines identical ; in another all four are identical : one has practically one *c* and *r*, another only the letters *S*, *s*, *V*, and *l* : in other stanzas each line reads backwards the same way as the next, or the whole stanza read backwards gives the next ; one stanza has three senses : two no labial letters : or each verse can be read backwards and forwards unchanged'. Again, 'Bharavi sets a bad example in his fondness for showing his skill in grammar, and he is in many ways the beginner of mannerisms in the later poets. The ridiculously frequent use of the root *tan* begins with him ; he is fond of passive perfect forms, including the impersonal use : the adverbial use of prepositional compounds is a favourite form of his ; many of Panini's rules of rare type are illustrated by him.........'.

Surely, such criticism is not without substance. 'Bharavi shares some of the peculirities of his time and falls into obvious errors of taste, but in dealing with his poetry the literary historian need not be wholly apologetic .... We cannot be sure, however, if Bharavi orginated the practice ; the deplor-

able taste might have developed in the interval ; .... But these patent, though inexcusable, blemishes, which Bharavi shares with all the Mahakavya writers of this period, do not altogether render nugatory his great, though perhaps less patent, merits as a poet and artist'.

It is not clear how much of popularity Bharavi enjoyed in his own time. Some argue on the basis of internal evidence that his poetry did not win the admiration of a section of people. In a verse (xiv. 5) the poet himself says: 'Some people extol the great wealth of meaning while others speak highly of the purity of diction. Thus when the taste of each man differs, words that give universal satisfaction are rare indeed'. That he was later held in high esteem, however, is beyond doubt. There are traditional remarks in praise of his poetry and it has been referred to in their works by authorities like Vamana, Anandavardhana, Mahimabhatta, Mammatabhatta, Ruyyaka, Bhoja and others. His influence on the later authors of the Mahakavya was considerable and Magha, the renowned and gifted author of the *Sisupalavadha*, had his poem as the model and imitated him with great zeal.

The names of at least twenty commentators on Bharavi are mentined, although most of their works are not extant. Two or three commentaries are available only in fragments. The only complete commentary available and widely known is that of Mallinatha called *Ghantapatha*.

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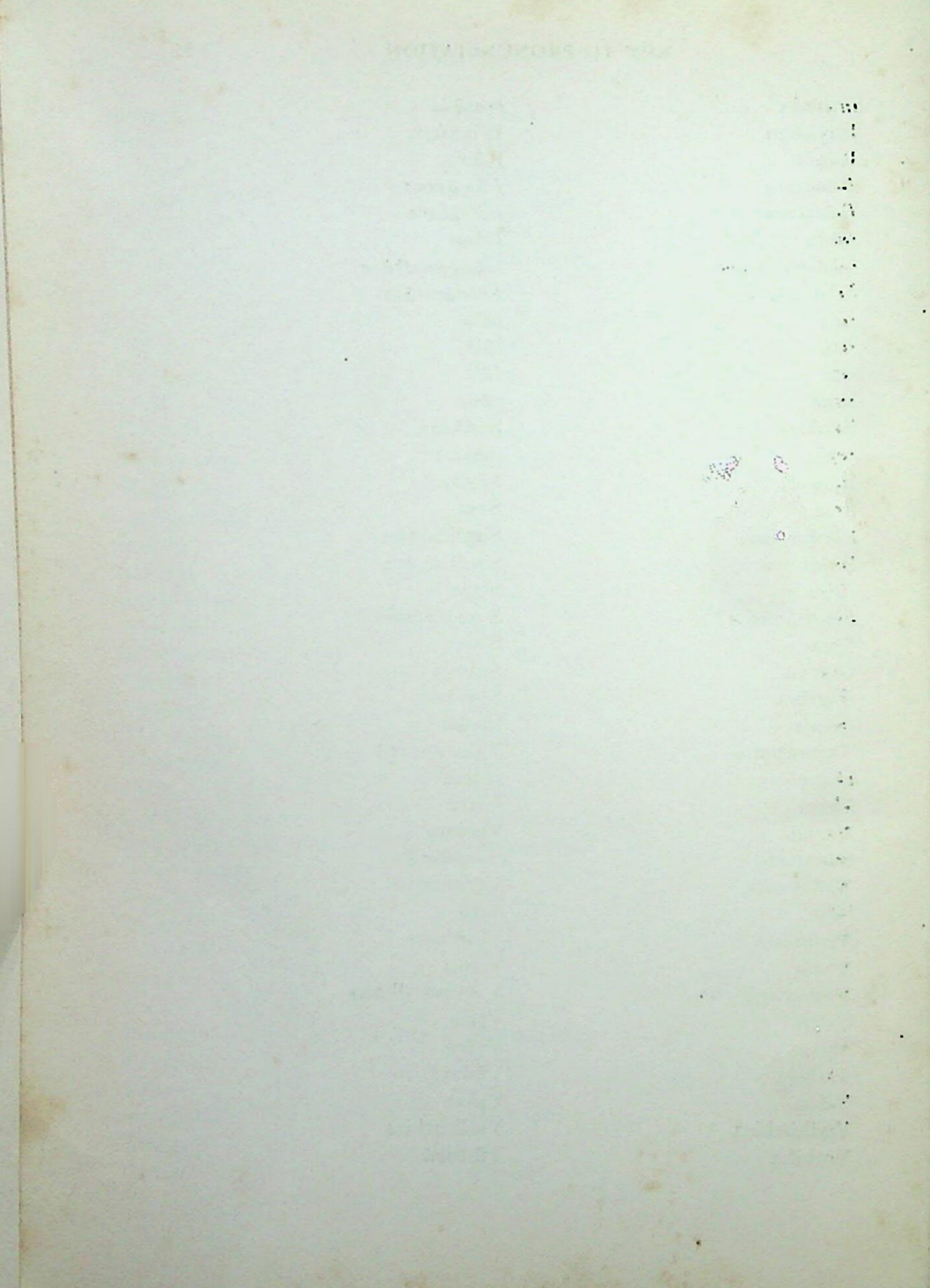
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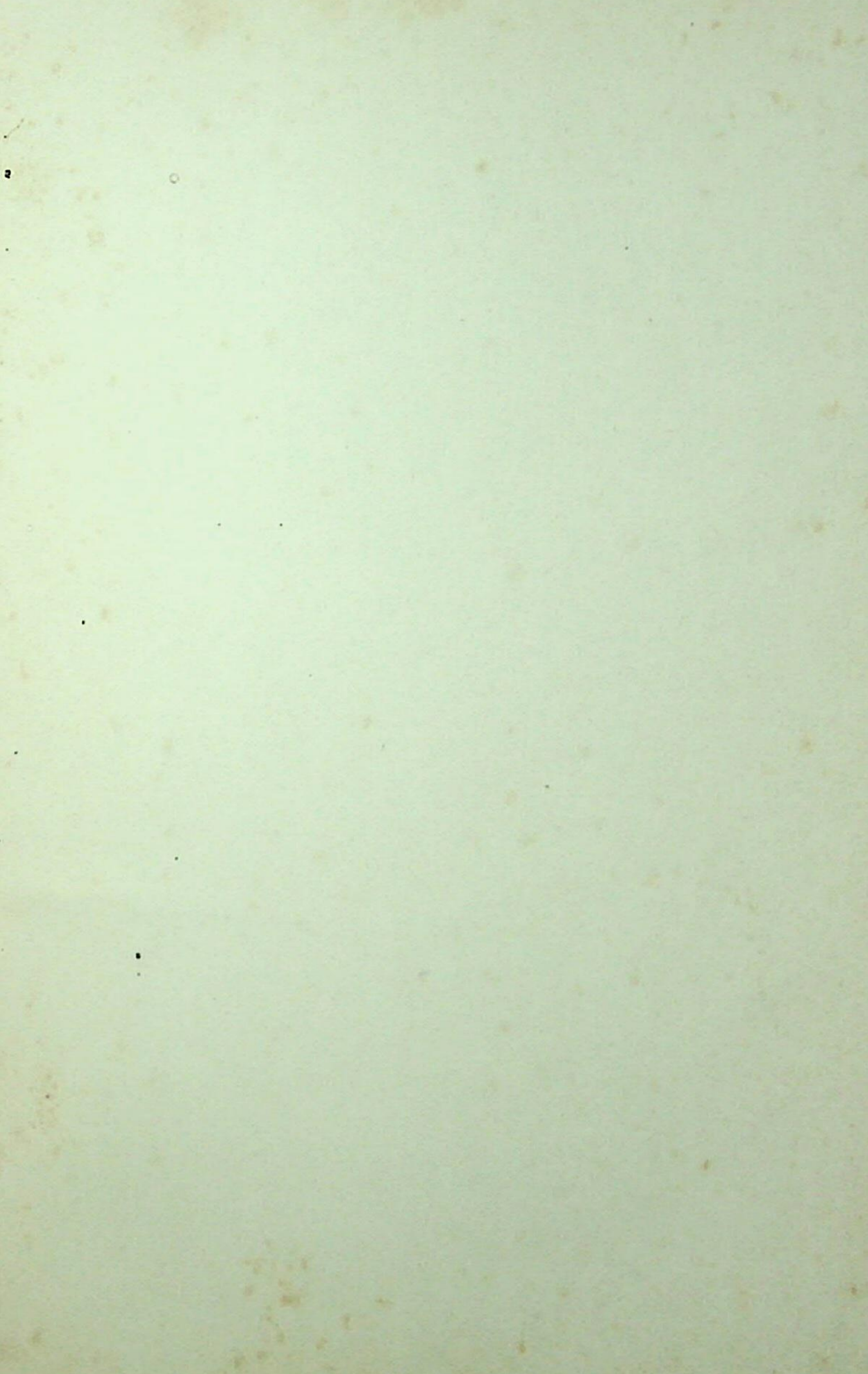
Airavata	Airāvata
akasa	*ākāśa*
Anandapura	Ānandapura
Anantanaga	Anantanāga
anujivin	*anujīvin*
ardha-narisvara	*ardha-nārīśvara*
artha-bhuyastva	*artha-bhūyastva*
arthantara-nyasa	*arthāntara-nyāsa*
artha-pradhana	*artha-pradhāna*
Asoka	Aśoka
Astadhyayi	*Aṣṭādhyāyī*
Asvasena	Aśvasena
atapatra-bharavi	*ātapatra-bhāravi*
Avantisundarikatha	*Avantīsundarīkathā*
Avantisundarikathasara	*Avantīsundarīkathāsāra*
Avinita	Avinīta
Bana	Bāṇa
Bandhujiva	Bandhujīva
Bharavi	Bhāravi
bhava	*bhāva*
Bhavani	Bhavānī
Bhima	Bhīma
Bhisma	Bhīṣma
Brahma	Brahmā
Brahmacarin	Brahmacārin
Brhaspati	Bṛhaspati
Brhatkatha	*Bṛhatkathā*
Cakravaka	Cakravāka
Cakravaki	Cakravākī
camara	*cāmara*
Damodara	Dāmodara
dana	*dāna*
danda	*daṇḍa*
Dandin	Daṇḍin

Dasakumaracarita	*Daśakumāracarita*
Dhrtarastra	Dhṛtarāṣṭra
dipa-sikha-kalidasa	*dīpa-śikhā-kālidāsa*
Draupadi	Draupadī
Drona	Droṇa
Drsya	Dṛśya
Duhsasana	Duḥśāsana
Durvinita	Durvinīta
Ganapatis	Gaṇapatis
Gandhamadana	Gandhamādana
Gandiva	Gāṇḍīva
Ganga	Gaṅgā
Garuda	Garuḍa
Gauri	Gaurī
ghanta-magha	*ghaṇṭā-māgha*
Ghantapatha	*Ghaṇṭāpatha*
giram prabhavah	*girām prabhavaḥ*
Godavari	Godāvarī
Halayudha	Halāyudha
Harsacarita	*Harṣacarita*
Himalaya	Himālaya
Indrakila	Indrakīla
Itihasa	Itihāsa
Jamadagnya	Jāmadagnya
japa	*japā*
jati	*jāti*
Kadambari	*Kādambarī*
Kailasa	Kailāsa
Kalidasa	Kālidāsa
Kama	Kāma
Kanci	Kāñcī
karmuka	*kārmuka*
Karna	Karṇa
Kartikeya	Kārtikeya
Kasa	Kāśa
Kasika-vrtti	*Kāśikā-vṛtti*
Kausika-gotra	Kauśika-gotra

Kaveri	Kāverī
Kavya	Kāvya
Kavyadarsa	*Kāvyādarśa*
Khandava	Khāṇḍava
Kirata	Kirāta
Kiratarjuniya	*Kirātārjunīya*
Krsna	Kṛṣṇa
Ksatriya	Kṣatriya
Kunti	Kuntī
Kusa	Kuśa
Lavali	Lavalī
Lokaloka	Lokāloka
Mahabharata	*Mahābhārata*
Mahakavya	Mahākāvya
Mahasaiva	Mahāśaiva
Malati	Mālatī
Mallika	Mallikā
Mallinatha	Mallinātha
Manasa	Mānasa
Mandakini	Mandākinī
Mandara	Mandāra
manjistha	*mañjiṣṭhā*
Mattavilasa	*Mattavilāsa*
Meghaduta	*Meghadūta*
Muka	Mūka
Narayanasvamin	Nārāyaṇasvāmin
narikela-phala-sammitam vaco bharaveh	*nārikela-phala-sammitaṃ vaco bhāraveḥ*
Nasikya	Nāsikya
Palasas	Palāśas
Pandava	Pāṇḍava
Pandu	Pāṇḍu
Panini	Pāṇini
Parasurama	Paraśurāma
Parijata	Pārijāta
Parvati	Pārvatī
Pasupata	Pāśupata
Pasupati	Paśupati
Prakrti	Prakṛti

prasada	*prasāda*
Priyangu	Priyaṅgu
Rama	Rāma
Ramayana	*Rāmāyaṇa*
Ratnakara	*Ratnākara*
sabda	*śabda*
sabda-pradhana	*śabda-pradhāna*
Sabdavatara	*Śabdāvatāra*
saka	*śaka*
sala	*sāla*
sali	*śāli*
sama	*sāma*
Sankara	Śaṅkara
saphari	*sapharī*
Sastra	Śāstra
Sesa	Śeṣa
Simhavisnu	Siṃhaviṣṇu
Sindhuvara	Sindhuvāra
sirisa	*śirīṣa*
Sisupalavadha	*Śisupālavadha*
Siva	Śiva
Sravya	Śravya
Sugriva	Sugrīva
tamala	*tamāla*
Tamraparni	Tāmraparṇī
upama	*upamā*
Usira	Uśīra
Varuna	Varuṇa
vasundhara	*vasundharā*
Vedavyasa	Vedavyāsa
vidya	*vidyā*
Viradatta	Vīradatta
Visnu	Viṣṇu
Visnuvardhana	Viṣṇuvardhana
Vrtra	Vṛtra
Vyasa	Vyāsa
Yadava	Yādava
Yaksa	Yakṣa
Yudhisthira	Yudhiṣṭhira
Yuthika	Yūthikā





BHARAVI, author of the *Kiratarjuniya,* one of the five major *mahakavyas* in Sanskrit, has been generally assigned by the scholars to the middle of the 6th century AD. First mentioned along with Kalidasa in the Aihole inscription of the Chalukya king, Pulekesin II, dated 634 AD, Bharavi is famous for the brevity and depth of his style *(arthagaurava)*. According to popular traditions, he earned the sobriquet Chhattva Bharavi because of the poetic fancy conceiving the flower dust flown up by the wind to form a golden umbrella. His *Kiratarjuniya,* an epic in 18 cantos, describes the circumstances that led to Arjuna's penance, his actual penance and his obtaining weapons from Lord Shiva. Valour is the main *rasa*. Professor A. B. Keith, while commenting upon the book, wrote, "There is no doubt of the power of Bharavi in description ; his style at its best has a calm dignity which is certainly attractive, while he excels also in the observation and record of the beauties of nature and maidens."

Professor Mrinal Kanti Gangopadhyay, a distinguished scholar in Sanskrit, in this monograph has made a comparative study of all the available commentains on Bharavi and also presented his own views highlighting the positive achievements of Bharavi as objectively as possible.

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